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QUIET ROADS
AND
SLEEPY VILLAGES

BY

ALLAN FEA

Author of
"Old World Places," "Nooks and Corners of Old England," &c.

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QUIET ROADS AND SLEEPY VILLAGES

CHAPTER I

BETWEEN THE TWO NORTH ROADS

In wandering haphazard through rural England, at every remote village or hamlet encountered one is reminded of the links these forgotten places form in the history of the country. A mere name upon a monument will often conjure up some familiar yet forgotten episode of the past, a silent memento of some stirring event hitherto hidden away in a dormant corner of the memory, requiring but this casual suggestion to fire the train of thought. From the tomb of the lord or lady of the Manor who flourished some centuries back, one goes in search of their once dwelling, the ancestral home which in more cases

than not has degenerated into "The Manor Farm." Here more links may be gathered to base a tolerably reliable chain of evidence from the time of the old Monastic days, and the great changes brought by the Dissolution. And so by gradual steps one is brought in touch with the mighty events of history, and we travel onward wondering at the wealth of these secluded records so replete with suggestions for rumination.

In our present rambles we propose to start from a London suburb and draw in rein near Oxford, but the route selected would undoubtedly disturb the peace of mind of good old Paterson as well as any other established authority who would wish to point out the nearest way. To say that our route travels through portions of Herts, Bedfordshire, Northants, Oxon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and Berkshire, will suffice to show both that the way is circuitous, to say the least of it, and that we are in no particular hurry to reach our destination. Without further preliminary, therefore, we will as before select Barnet as our starting point, and, taking a more northernly direction, get beyond the Middlesex borders of the historic chase which in our last journey kept us company in the direction of Enfield, and thence towards Essex.

An imaginary square or, rather, parallelogram drawn from the four points, St. Albans, Hatfield,

Aldenham, and Hadley, still encloses a wide expanse of unspoiled country; and between the Midland line to the East of Aldenham and the Great Northern Railway, it is possible to wander and forget the existence of the iron road. The tract of country between Barnet Gate and the little remote village of Ridge, *viâ* Rowley Green and "Well End," for example, extends only just over the metropolitan area, yet the narrow, deep-set lanes hereabouts recall the very depths of Devonshire. Approached by one of these leafy lanes is a snug little tree-embowered residence called "The Oaks," whose simple, unpretentious exterior encloses many queer old rooms and a miniature chapel with ornamental screen and raised sanctuary.

Our direction lies Bedford way, but we will avoid the monotonous and uninteresting northern road which intersects our imaginary parallelogram. The old main highway, which took its more devious course through the whole length of South Mymms village, formed an S-like flourish before approaching "Colney Green," now called London Colney. But the old road if more rural has its disadvantages, for by following it we miss the "Restoration Arch," which, like Temple Bar, was carried off from London a couple of centuries earlier and placed in peaceful Hertfordshire.

Triumphal arches nowadays, if more gorgeous in design, will bear no comparison with the solid construction of this more severely classic structure which, by repute, was re-erected by General Monck, Duke of Albemarle, as a memento of the exiled Stuarts' joyous journey up from Dover. It is worth a detour, not so much on account of its Renaissance formality, as a reminder of that May-day of rejoicing, and a stretch of fancy will portray the centre of attraction astride his high-stepping charger, smilingly saluting his cheering subjects, the pretty girls in particular. Evelyn's picture of that eventful day literally sparkles with sunlight and vivid colour. One can almost hear the bewildering medley of incessant bell-ringing, trumpeting, and shouting. The monumental urn or vase upon the summit of the archway may be emblematic of pleasant things, from the welcoming wine which flowed so freely, to Roman river deities. But when one contemplates the fact that "butcher" Cumberland also passed beneath this very triumphal entry (some eighty-six years after the advent of the Merry Monarch), that he might halt for relaxation after his brutality in extinguishing the last hopes of the Jacobite cause, one is inclined to look upon that lofty-placed vessel as a monumental receptacle for the ashes of the unfortunate Stuart line.

The Manor of Dyrham, to which the archway forms a park entry, was one of many ancestral houses hereabouts that have been destroyed by fire. Wrotham Park, which the older north road skirts, was burned down just thirty years ago, and since then, Brookmans, further north.

In the retired hamlet of Rabley stands a lofty fluted stone column, which by local tradition marks the actual spot where, after the defeat of Barnet, the King-maker expired. Though the better-known obelisk at Hadley claims the distinction of marking the spot, oral association has it that the wounded Earl was carried away by his few scattered supporters in the direction of St. Albans; but life was ebbing fast and he expired on the way. In those days a religious cell dedicated to St. Catherine existed at Rabley, and it is not unlikely that the dying man was taken there. Some small remnants of the sculptured masonry may still be seen built into the wall of a thatched cottage that stands by the stream crossing this picturesque valley.

If, as we have said, some of the old mansions hereabouts have passed away, there are others of exceptional interest not far off, such as lordly Tittenhanger, for instance, or princely Hatfield. Closer at hand is the moated manor of Shenley, twice rebuilt since erected by an Earl of Salisbury

(whose name it holds today), a typical example of a mansion of the latter part of the seventeenth century. One must not inquire too closely into its traditional secret passage beneath the stone flags of the hall, or the hiding places in the attics. To the angular spaces formed between gable and flooring are frequently attributed a cunningness of purpose of which the constructors were never guilty. But if people never were put away in these confined places, such cannot be said of the securely solid "Round House" in the village, for it looks as formidable and forbidding as ever. If of late years a palatial coffee tavern has sprung up in the vicinity to put this lock-up out of countenance, there are still old cottages to keep it company, and the little isolated church with wooden tower and adjacent hoary yew trees remains sufficiently peaceful to inspire elegies in the poetic minded.

Beyond the church, St. Albans way, some old out-buildings skirt the road, with a boundary wall sufficiently low to reveal the loveliest of gardens, at least we can speak for the autumn, when we passed that way, for it was then a feast for the eyes—a flood of brilliant colour. Near by ripples the river Colne, insignificant in comparison with its importance at Windsor. Old maps record this spot as "Colney Chapel," and an oval-shaped

moat filled in within living memory may be traced within its grounds; but the very name of the ancient manor of Weld has departed, as well as the Georgian house which succeeded it. The materials of the mansion (erected at prodigious expense) were advertised in *The Times* on the day that Trafalgar was won, but speculative builders evidently were too elated with the glorious tidings to think of their private interests, for the actual sale was only a *fait accompli* in the twentieth century.

Did our way lie towards Hatfield, we should pass, by pleasant lanes, that historic mansion in miniature at North Mymms. The style at least suggests the grand old seat of the Cecils; closer inspection, however, will reveal many modern additions; still, these have been effected with considerable knowledge and taste.

Well-beaten tracks such as venerable St. Albans we must necessarily avoid. "Holywell," to the south of it, recalls that beauteous favourite of Queen Anne who upon one occasion silenced a modest request by Prince George with a characteristic: "Christ! Madam, must I remind you that *I* had your promise first?" Holywell House, erected by Marlborough for his imperious duchess, was pulled down in the year of Victoria's accession. The village of Sandridge, close by, prides

itself upon the honour of being "Mrs. Freeman's" birthplace, regardless of the fact that Burwell Park in Eastern Lincolnshire puts in a similar claim. The actual house in Hertfordshire, according to local tradition, is Water End, a late Tudor house of the style rather prevalent in this part of the shire, stone mullions and finely-moulded chimney-stacks being conspicuous. Close by the River Lea has to be forded, and the proximity of the stream gives the old house particular charm. It has long been used as a farm, as a peep into the spacious court-yard will show. This principal E-shaped side faces east, like so many of the mansions of our ancestors, showing that the west wind was not always in favour. The interior of the house, though somewhat rugged and bare, has many points of interest, especially a great oak staircase occupying more than its share of space. One encounters the usual blocked-up doorways and mullioned windows revealing the greater comforts required by the more humble successors to the Jennings.

Though built by a Jennings, it was not by Sarah's father, Richard. The association of the house with the spirited duchess gives it, of course, additional interest. Nor can her no less handsome sister Frances be left outside. If their mother is said to have been too worldly wise, she

Water End

Rothamstead

at least, in cautioning her fascinating daughters of the dangers of Court life in those times, gained for them both exceptionally good matches, though truly in her later days the senior duchess had but little to boast about. Strange noises are heard in the draughty rooms and passages of Water End. In the dead of night perchance the slaps exchanged between Sarah and her equally spirited mother recur in these days to remind the later residents that superannuated warriors enjoy nothing so much as fighting their battles o'er again. In a corner of one of the bedrooms there is a deep cupboard, at the furthermost end of which a trap-door in the flooring leads down to a space beneath some steps of the staircase, where possibly at one time or another an outlet may have been, similar to the hiding-place at Harvington.

About the same distance from Sandridge to Water End in the opposite direction stands another typical semi-Elizabethan and Jacobean mansion, which, far from degenerating in its old age, has put on a new lease of prosperity, for, as a treasure-house of antique art in the way of carved oak, there are few houses to rival it. And this is little wonder, considering the enthusiasm as a collector of the eminent sculptor (ex-athlete and handsomest man of his time), who with

polished courtesy and modest pride would conduct fellow enthusiasts round the "linen" panelled rooms, pointing out the peculiarities and beauties of the mediæval and Renaissance workmanship displayed on every side. Here one may study elaborate oak carvings from base to roof: every conceivable form, from the ruggedly chiselled type to the most delicately handled. Nothing is modern. To the original wainscoted rooms have been added some of the grand old fireplaces from Rawdon House, Hoddesdon (which since its conversion into a nunnery has been shorn of some of its finest fittings, saving the remarkable staircase still in situ). The Rothamstead doll's-house, as big as a couple of German travelling trunks of the largest dimensions, with which nearly a dozen generations of children have played, like the house in which it stands, has in its several apartments carved oak over-mantels stretching from floor to ceiling with coeval accessories to instruct and doubtless bewilder the successive sprouting branches of the Lawes-Wittewronge tree.

A couple of miles on the other side of the high road to Bedford will bring us to Mackery End, a mansion of the same period as Rothamstead, but one, alas! which has been ruined by restoration; indeed, the garish red brick looks sufficiently

new to make poor Charles Lamb turn in his Edmontonian resting-place, for a glance at his immortal essays reveals the warm corner Mackery End occupied in his heart. It is difficult to travel anywhere without our quaint and humorous friend *Elia* turning up with the same persistence as Dickens. And in literature is not the delightful essayist ever to the fore? The ceaseless books and articles written about him are indeed a tribute to his genius. It was not so much the mansion of Mackery End that forcibly appealed to Lamb as the farm buildings hard by. His pleasurable lament concerning the change wrought by time had reference more particularly to the farmstead re-visited after the lapse of years: the disappointment in comparing a beloved picture painted on the memory—and thereby naturally highly coloured by the imagination—with the actual thing, was an experience which must come home to almost everyone. Long since this house has been rebuilt, but the ample barns and sheds adjacent to it must look much the same as they did upon the occasion of Lamb's pilgrimage.

Leaving memories of sensitive Charles and his direct opposite, vindictive Sarah of Water End, behind, we must hurry along, for we have much ground to cover in these wanderings. Just here

we are in the land of "Ends." In addition to those already named, we have Porter's End, Raisin's End, Carter's End, Ansel's End, Rye End, Hoo End, and no End more. Pretty Kimpton village, through which we pass to reach the last-named terminus, is retired, but only semi-ancient. Its buildings are a nondescript mixture of Georgian with earlier and later periods. The church stands aloof on the side of a hill as if to watch the little that is going on below. Running parallel, a steepish road leads to Hoo End and Whitwell, where conditions are older and more dilapidated. One poor old gabled cripple, whose walls by repute have enjoyed the honour of hearing Bunyan holding forth, has now to put up with, we were going to say the usual aimless affronts of the rising generation, did not the battered casements prove plain enough that they had served the purpose of targets. Other ancient cottages here, at Bendish to the right, and Whitwell to the north, both for their irregularity of outline and for their picturesque surroundings, would make admirable subjects for the sketch-book, for this part of Hertfordshire shows what the county can do in the way of unspoiled country. Compare, for example, this secluded corner with Codicot, a couple of miles or so to the south-east upon the northern highway. Yet there, too, are a

few old "bits" from which the "jerry-builder" might well take pattern.

A nice old gabled inn, with massive wooden projecting sign, at Whitwell gives this village the finishing touch of charm. It should be a happy hunting ground for artists. Here one could wander afar without encountering any railway; indeed, by bearing in a north-westerly direction, towards Bedford, *viâ* Offley, Higham, Silsoe, and Clophill, there is nothing to mar the stretch of lovely scenery for over sixteen miles, and that direction would we take had not Hitchin some peculiarities to attract our steps more northward past the ivy-clad tower of King's Walden Church. Off to the right lies Ippollitts, a name significant of old things generally, and round about the church, and at the hamlet of Gosmore to the west, are some nice old gabled farms and cottages, with dates upon some of them showing that they were standing when the Civil War was raging.

The many ancient hostelries one encounters at Hitchin speak of the prosperous coaching days. On every side gape wide archways leading into spacious yards. These entrances in some instances have their original oaken doorways with carved spandrils overhead, and their court-yards beyond with aged overhanging gables meditatively looking down upon new conditions;

for here, as in most other towns of any antiquity, the ample space is now utilised by the motor trade, and the risk of fire brought with this new lease of life, one would think, must cause the hoary fabrics some anxiety. Upon entering the town by the narrow road that winds to the left is such a garage—"The Royal Oak," so to speak up to date—a curious and incongruous medley of mediæval architecture and modern mechanics. Close at hand stands a gabled cottage displaying dragons on its carved barge-boards, and to add to the old-world effect there is below a display of ancient furniture and plate sufficiently conspicuous to make a passing connoisseur in such curios positively envious.

Turning up Sun Street, other old inns are passed, "The Angel" and "The Sun," also having quaint courtyards," the twin gables of the former displaying barge-boards of different design, less elaborately carved, but as old as those of Ockwells. "The Sun" looks a typical Georgian coaching house, judging by its street-front, yet it is very much older within.

In following the Bedford road, the "Cooper's Arms" is passed, a stone building of the time of Richard III., in which the original open timber roof of the hall survives. Standing back to the left of the high road are the remains of the ancient

Priory of Whitefriars, a harmonious mixture of mediæval Stuart and Georgian architecture, whose Gothic cloister arches were blocked up in Charles II.'s day.

On the northern side of the town also are many old buildings revealing details of Elizabethan date, but the gem of Hitchin is a very curious old building called "the Biggin," which stands close upon the rather insignificant River Hiz, on the south-east side of the church. This "Biggin" is the quaintest thing imaginable. Most of the other old buildings in the town have been more or less tampered with from time to time, but "the Biggin" somehow or another has escaped, and as a Hitchinite truly enough observed when he led the way to it, though rather in a tone of disparagement than in praise of its picturesqueness: "There ain't nothing like it nowhere." And truly if this local sage had travelled the length and breadth of England he certainly would not have found a duplicate. The exterior looks decrepit and battered: a fine Tudor chimney and mullioned window drawing attention at once to former dignity degenerated into squalor. But it is not until one enters the doorway and passage leading into the tiny cloistered courtyard that one sees the full extent of its quaintness. Each nook and corner reveals a study for a sketch. From one

position you have the row of stout round wooden pillars supporting the overhanging rooms. You move a few feet and you have in view the entrance to a rugged oak staircase, mysterious in its depth of shadow. At another angle you see a well-proportioned Elizabethan window with oak mullions and transoms, with diamond-paned glazing of varying tints of green, and beneath the window the half-timber construction of the wall adds considerably to its picturesque effect. You ascend another queer old staircase to the best apartment in the almshouse, for though originally a Priory of the Gilbertine Order, it became a Manor House after the Dissolution, degenerating into a workhouse then an almshouse. Here we have an original panelled chamber of the Manor House, with rich overmantel of carved oak bearing the date 1583. The moulding of the wainscoting beside the fireplace, if placed the wrong side up, is, after all, in harmony with the general oddity of the place. The narrow corridors and the alleys with rounded ceilings are strangely suggestive of a rabbit-warren. You wander about, speculating upon the meaning of strange devices designed upon the narrow doorways and above the panelling of the passages, and in your peregrination stumble upon yet two more staircases. Here and there you encounter some of

the aged inmates winding their way to their several dustbins formally arranged in the courtyard. They pay no heed to the intruding stranger, but glide on their mission with pail and ashpan like so many silent ghosts. To walk out of that curious building back into the thoroughfares busy with noisy motor traffic, is to step over an interval of three centuries and more in little over a dozen strides.

At the grand old church near at hand the workmen were busily engaged. Pieces of the organ were scattered broadcast, with shovels and picks to keep them company. It is to be hoped that the beautiful fifteenth-century roofs of the side aisles, the carved bosses, brackets, and the graceful angel figures, will be leniently handled in the course of restoration; also the screens of the same date, displaying delicate and elaborate tracery of rich and chaste design, with frieze of angel figures whose wings are interlaced. A striking feature of this fine old church is the imposing entrance porch with vaulted roof, embattled parapet, and octagonal stair turret. The huge and massive oak door is also the original one. Crumbling recumbent effigies lie beneath the many windows of the north aisle, knights clad in chain-mail, and altar tombs of the Pulter family; while the Radcliffe monuments are assembled in the south aisle.

Between Hitchin and Shefford, on the main road to Bedford, there is but little of note. Among the villages lying off the road a little way, Pirton is far and away the most interesting to the lover of old buildings, for here, instead of the usual Grange, or Hall, or Manor House, we have all three of them. The trio belong to seventeenth-century date, yet each one has distinct characteristics. Anyone may have free access to the "old Hall," for it has degenerated into the village inn, rather an indignity to the worthy master, Thomas Docwra, whose arms and quarterings are depicted on the walls (a name in which the letters have the appearance of having been a little mixed, perhaps through congenial company). The moated Grange of brick and timber is no poetic fancy, but a well-established fact, even to a bridge-house which spans the water. The gabled Manor House (which also bears the Docwra arms with those of Periam and Hales) in several places, has carved barge-boards and quite a manorial nail-studded door within its ample porch. In addition to this distinguished three, there is yet another good old seventeenth-century house, Hammond's Farm, containing panelled rooms and carved overmantels; and returning again into the high road, a once moated Tudor house, Old Ramerick Manor, stands back a little

way on the right-hand side just midway between Shefford and Hitchin. It marks the boundary line of Bedfordshire, a county famous for its straw and lace, and a market garden throughout, and, though a much-neglected touring ground, containing its share of antiquarian interest. If Bedfordshire can do nothing in the way of castles, its churches are particularly noticeable, and make up for the lack of mediæval military architecture. The handsome proportions of the Bedfordshire churches, their lofty graceful towers, and the fine situations of many, give them justifiable prominence in their several villages. Such, however, cannot be said of Shefford in particular, for, excepting the tower, everything looks very modern. But skirting the wide street of this sleepy little market town there are some very charming old buildings—one block in particular having its overhanging storeys propped up by pillars after the fashion of the famous "rows" of Chester. Shefford was an important place when Icknield Way was made, as is proved by the fact of the many relics of the period, specimens of glass mainly, which have been discovered in this vicinity from time to time.

Overlooking the River Ivel to the west of the town stands an old Priory of the Gilbertines, which that terror in the shape of architects, Wyatt,

did more to ruin during his brief attack than did all the centuries before he was born. Fortunately he did not destroy the double cloister walls by which the canons and canonesses of Chicksands Priory could pass to their devotions without distraction on the way. The Osborns, who bought the lands in Elizabeth's reign, have distinguished themselves in various ways, and many curious things may be seen here, not the least remarkable of which is a gorgeous bedstead decorated with Stuart crowns, and in which not only James I. slept, but in which his great-grandson is said to have been born, and consequently it was closely associated with the anti-Jacobite warming-pan controversy.

CHAPTER II

ACROSS BEDFORDSHIRE

A DELIGHTFUL stretch of wooded country lies on the other side of the Bedford road, and lovers of sylvan scenery could not do better than make a detour, *viâ* Old Walden and Northill, in going towards the capital. The pretty little village of Southill, on the eastern skirts of the Walden woods, is quite a gem of rusticity: groups of cosy cottages situated in their brilliant little gardens. The "Warren" close by is well named, for never was such a dense colony of rabbits. On this estate was born the gallant Vice-Admiral whose death for an error is a blot in George II.'s reign. Byng's remains rest with other members of that family in the little church. Trees of all descriptions flourish in profusion in this densely-wooded tract, but the noble fir plantations are especially impressive, and the grey ivy-mantled wood paling form-

ing the enclosure harmonises with and seems to enhance the sombre avenues and mysterious glades of black-green. The myriad of pheasants and rabbits, however, that scamper across the road appear to pay but little heed to any attempts at enclosure.

Beyond these woods the road descends into Old Walden, whose doll's-house cottages remind one of a *kindergarten* model village. Here the ornamental shelters of the pumps even have a fanciful fairy-story look; and the thatched inn, with its hilly background topped by dark fir wood, is quite like a peep into Devonshire. Up on the heights stands a modern Tudor mansion, but quaint originality does not extend so far, for the architecture is rigidly correct: a striking example of modern work. The village was evidently very proud of its colonel Squire and his beautiful young wife, the account of whose happy marriage sounded like the pages of a love romance. But, alas! as we record these things, what should we see announced in the paper but the Squire's sudden death, and beneath a picture of his handsome little son a statement to the effect that the neighbourhood unanimously votes him to take over his father's leadership of the local Territorials.

Going towards Ickwell, you dive down amidst

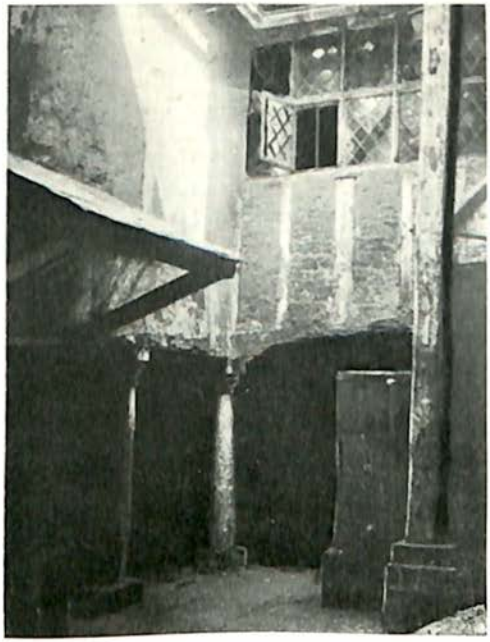
further plantations. There is no direction-post at the point where the roads converge, and as Ickwell lies buried in trees to the left, the chances are that those in search of it unprovided with a map will at the first trial go straight ahead and miss it entirely. But if this winding road to the left be taken, the quaint village green approached by an avenue of towering beeches and limes is soon in sight. Off to the left stands "the Bury" of the red brick, Queen Anne type, with a profusion of dormers. Around the green are dotted little yellow cemented cottages with deep thatch roofs. More important are "The Old House," with its snug porch entrance, and the plain late Georgian farmhouse with rusty roof. Near the latter is the entrance gate to the College standing in park-like lands, which, so far as likeness is concerned, might be a twin-brother to "the Bury."

But the glory of Ickwell Green is its tall and tapering maypole surmounted by a golden ball and ornamented with a crimson spiral pattern. Though it is of considerable height, it is quite dwarfed by a magnificent elm close by, which, o'ertopping it, looks down with contemptuous superiority notwithstanding the resplendent gold and red. A neglected and ruinous pump amid a tangle of weeds, like an oldest inhabitant, has witnessed the gaieties of many festive May-days

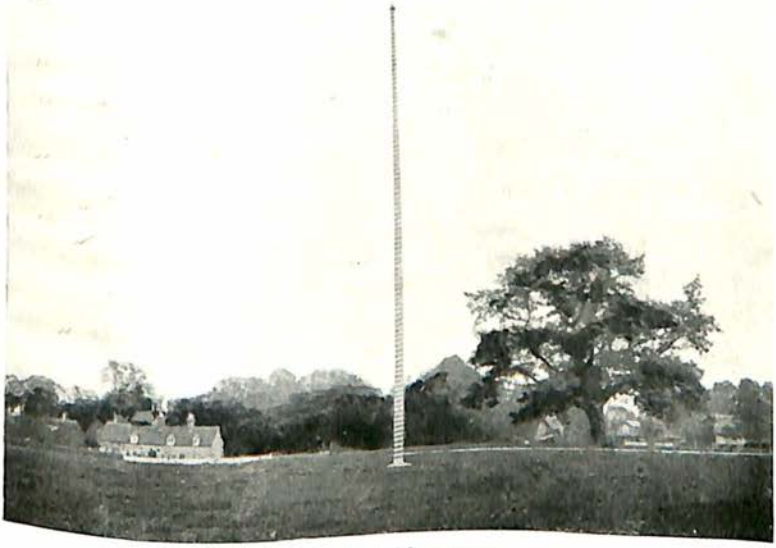
before the predecessor pole rotted at the base and had to retire on its laurels. Just beyond the green a little northward stands a tempting morsel for a sketch: a charming cottage of timber and thatch, around which are giant yew-trees cut into fantastic shapes, including an imposing and massive-looking archway with pinnacles on its summit. And immediately opposite stands another gabled cottage robed in warm-coloured cement, with a gay garden and a lordly weathercock and ample hayrick background to add the final touch of homeliness.

Northill supplies the spiritual requirements of Ickwell, but, like the church of Walden, funds have not been wanting for its restoration, and in consequence it has within quite a modern look. There is a brass to one of the Herveys of Ickwell Bury: Sir Nicholas, who was a Knight of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and in the suite of Queen Katherine of Arragon at Ampthill Castle. His sudden death there, when on a secret mission for the King shortly before the Queen's divorce, looks almost like a sinister removal, although nothing is recorded to that effect.

If we turn now to the south-west so as to rejoin the main road, we shall presently find ourselves at Cotton End, having left the Refectory remains of Walden Abbey in their wooded seclusion to



"The Biggin"



Ickwell Maypole

the left. The Jacobean red brick and stone-faced Manor House at Cotton End is well worth passing notice, but there is little to delay us until, avoiding Bedford, we turn at a fork in the road towards Elstow. Here again there is no direction-post where most needed, but perhaps the local authorities are under the impression that Elstow's Bunyan associations are sufficiently famous to need instructions as to how to get there. Whether Elstow's air of seclusion is attributable to this it would be unprofitable to inquire, but few literary shrines are so unspoiled. Yet stay!—the diminutive cottage where the immortal Anabaptist resided has been so cleaned, scraped, re-cemented, re-glazed, and re-roofed that only the beams within give any real idea as to its actual age. Antiquated prints of it show something far less spick and span, where the timbers in the external walls are curved and twisted almost as delightfully as artistic license induces some of our modern illustrators to translate rigidly straight lines. Even telegraph poles in some line drawings succumb to such picturesque treatment. Hogarth's "line of beauty" is seductive but misleading if too many liberties are taken in this way. But then again over-accuracy is almost as bad. To put in every brick and cobble-stone within a range of five hundred yards or more is an accom-

plishment which must tax the very keenest eyesight.

To return to Bunyan's home, a conspicuous notice-board records that he "was born in this parish in 1628 not far from this spot, and lived in this cottage after his marriage in 1649." Perhaps it was here that one of his admirers came with the express purpose of seeing John's study and library, and found on an otherwise bare shelf only a Bible and a few of his own manuscripts.

Further along we find the heaped-up gables of the village inn, which amid its farmyard surroundings looks as primitive as in the days of the reformed tinker. The gables also, and yawning gateways opposite too, quite take us back to his times. Doubtless upon occasions the tap-room of "The Swan" was cleared of the enthusiast's loyalist opponents as effectually as that of "The George" at Bedford town is said to have been by the aid only of a pewter-pot. Upon inquiry possibly the very mug dented by royalist nobs might be forthcoming. Be this as it may, a little exploration will suffice to unearth Bunyan's coat and walking-stick to add a touch of realism to his knock-about days. Not many years ago his tinman's anvil appeared in a London sale-room. It was an odd and primitive-looking affair, the head of it shaped like an elephant's foot, and the

reverse end pointed so as to fasten securely in the ground. The full measurement was but two feet in length and the weight sixty pounds. Stamped upon the iron surface was "John Bunyan, Helstow,"[1] with the date 1647. It was originally sold by an ironmonger at St. Neots to a marine-store dealer as scrap-iron.

The grand old church of Elstow embosomed in trees makes a very effective group viewed from the green. Here stands a fragment only of the village cross, and a bow-shot away is the Old Moot Hall, of timber and herring-bone brickwork, with narrow Gothic doorways in the oaken framing. This market house looks forlorn and odd standing practically in the middle of a field, for the green is now enclosed, and it requires more than ordinary effort to picture it in busy prosperous days. A peculiar feature of the church is its detached tower, the pure Norman arch of whose door is especially fine. The chapter house, with central slender column supporting the vaulted roof, recalls in modest fashion that at Southwell Minster. Among the brasses we find a Hervey of Ickwell, who became abbess of the Benedictine Abbey which stood on the further side of the church. This abbey was succeeded by a secular structure of the Renaissance period,

[1] The old name of Elstow was Helenstow.

considerable remains of which are still standing, its skeleton walls, bare windows, and stone archways making a very picturesque ruin. Peering over an adjacent wall are the gables and carved oak barge-boards of an old house that once belonged to the Hillersdons, whose monuments may be found in the church. Medbury, another ancient manor not far off, has suffered worse than the abbey, for its ancient stones have been carted off for building purposes.

The villages of Kempston, to the west of Elstow, Biddenham, and Bromham (between which the Ouse winds its serpentine course), are all attractive. Their churches are perhaps a little too well cared for, as will be explained anon. Kempston has suffered much in the way of internal restoration. The painted panels of the once rood-screen are framed and glazed, and other sweeping alterations have been effected. In the very orderly and trim churchyard the inscription on a plain tombstone catches the eye: "Elizabeth, wife of King George, who died Dec. 2nd, 1878, aged 59." It is rather vague. A little further information concerning this Queen(?) might have saved much tantalising speculation, unless we take for granted that somehow or other the cart has got before the horse.

Equally tantalising was Biddenham Church,

for considerable labour had to be expended in getting inside. Less trim than the last, its assertive gargoyles on the angles of the tower and pert weathercock upon the stunted steeple stand out against the plush-like, rich green moss which thickly covers the adjacent cottage roofs.

The usual difficulty of keys presenting itself, the Church Farm opposite (a manorial-looking place with a gateway beneath some overhanging outbuildings) was the first place of call, with the seemingly satisfactory result that two keys upon a ring were forthcoming. To one of these keys the outer portal of the porch yielded, but the inner door held firm against all efforts with the other key. Upon second inquiries at the farm, after a muttered discussion just audible within, we were told that the proper key No. 2 was obtainable at a farmhouse situated across some meadows. With a sigh of resignation we set off, and at length having found the way to this isolated building, knocked and explained our mission. "The key of the church? Oh, yes," replied the damsel who had come forth. "You'll find it in the porch, *under the mat!*"

Golfing is said at times to be exasperating as well as exhilarating, but how about the pastime of church-key hunting?

The inside of Biddenham Church, however, is

sufficiently interesting to repay the efforts made to gain an entrance. A parclose screen has delicate tracery, and on either side of the chancel arch are "squints." On the left-hand side of the altar is a mural monument in alabaster and marble to: "Wiilia Boteler, Esquire," who died in 1621, son and heir of another W. B., Esq., who in turn was son and heir of a W. B., Knight. There are kneeling figures of this Boteler and his wife. He is clad in armour, while she wears a curious hood and mantle. Two sons and three daughters kneel below, and the arms of the family are shown in coloured marble overhead. Near by are two other mural tablets and a few curious brasses. The organ is far too conspicuous, oocupying as it does half the chancel. In the tower hangs a fine piece of tapestry with the heads of Roman Emperors worked upon the border. It belonged to a German nobleman, whose shield and crest are represented with the date 1549. Some carved oak panels in the vestry are the sole remnants of the ancient benches. These, of course, like the framed fragments of the screen, are interesting in their way, but in such detached museum style they look rather like a melancholy reproach. The porch has a good wooden roof, with carved boss at the intersection of the moulded cross-beams.

The neighbouring church of Bromham proved

to be even more obstinately inaccessible, for the first difficulty which presented itself was to find the village, and, when found, to find the situation of the church. Where one ought to turn out of the high road for Bromham, as in the case of Elstow, there is no direction-post. The traveller is directed to Olney only, and so in ignorance he leaves Bromham behind. However, when he has found his way back again to this turning-point and reached the village, the position of the church is quite as tantalising, for though its "bearings" are pointed out, there seems to be no way of getting at them, for every turning, lane, or footpath appears to go in every direction but that wanted. At length in one of these ineffectual attempts we reached a farmhouse, and, as the church was visible from here, obtained permission to make a *bee line* across an orchard so as to reach a field path which seemed to go direct. This proved successful, and we reached the very pretty stone Gothic structure, whose fine embattled tower, like so many of the Bedfordshire churches, is its most striking feature. All doors, of course, were locked, and now began the hunt: an exceptional one in this case. "A stern chase is a long chase," and so this proved to be. It was useless returning to the farm, for there we had been told in starting that the church was "always

open"; and so, espying some cottagers crossing a field, we made for them in all haste. "Church key? Oh, yes," after the problem was thought out a bit. An old man, they said, was to be found in the churchyard who was related or connected in some way to somebody who they thought *might have* the key. Returning to the churchyard, we searched and searched in vain, ending with a spirited sprint around so as to overtake this evasive old man at some point or another should he be walking round the same way, the reverse side of the compass. No, that aged person was a myth; for the day was not the first of April. Utterly dispirited, we next turned our weary steps towards a substantial homestead with a noble nobbed entrance gate which loomed in the distance. This strange abode proved to be hollow! Though externally there appeared to be the ordinary storeys and windows, it was nothing but a stable open to the timber roofing. "The key? Oh, yes," said a horsey-looking person in shirt-sleeves and gaiters. "You must go to the Vicarage. It's yonder across those meadows, close against that farm." The *very farm* from which we had first set forth upon this weary pilgrimage! Returning to the church, we encountered a couple of motorists who were trying to peer through the windows—an acrobatic accomplishment which

never proves satisfactory at any church we have so far attempted. Reassuring these tourists that the key was within measurable distance, we hastened to the Vicarage, and after the absence of a quarter of an hour or so, returned this time in triumph. The size alone of the key gave confidence as to its genuineness. But—— The north and south porch doors were tried in vain, and then the western entrance, the vestry and another small door approached by a flight of steps. That delusive key would *not fit one* of the locks. The motorists departed in disgust, attributing the failure no doubt to our stupidness; and as time was getting on, and we had yet many miles to cover before dusk set in, there was nothing to be done but to acknowledge total and absolute defeat. In returning thanks for the loan of the key, we called attention to the fact that it was useless. "They took it off the wrong peg," observed the maid as she handed another, which this time was politely but firmly declined.

And so the peaceful rest of the royalist Sir Lewis Dyve and those mortal remains to whom other ancient monuments belong were left quiet and undisturbed that afternoon. The rugged Gothic arched oaken entrance of the south porch, however, required no key for admittance to the beauty of its bold design. An old poor-box, too,

placed in a kind of cage attached to a pier of the nave, could just be seen in the half-light through the narrow apertures of a wire door.

The village of Stevington, to the north-west of Bromham, possesses an imposing cross raised on some steps at the junction of the roads. Its capital is modern, but designed in good taste. This place was famous for its Holy well, and the pilgrimages once made here, as they are still, to the more famous St. Winifred's. This well, whose water has been never known to freeze, however, is disappointing, for it is now cemented up. The old Manor House, too, that served as a hospitium, has been pulled down. From drawings which exist it appears to have been a curious structure. The church of Stevington contains much that is of interest both in carving and sculptuary. The north chapel, in a deplorably ruinous condition, is walled off from the main structure, and can only be visited from the outside, and what little there is of it only calls for pity. Some remains of the Rood screen are decorated with horses painted on a red background. More curious are the carvings on some of the bench-ends, which, though the seatings have been modernised, have been suffered to remain. The gentlemen in Tudor pot-helmets are not the most decorous, and sprawl about in ungainly attitudes, drinking, sleeping, or

suffering from the "colly-wobbles." One studious person sits apart at a reading-desk trying to concentrate his thoughts. The Elizabethan hat and full sleeves remind one of the queer assembly which promenaded the recent Shakespeare Exhibition at Earl's Court. In addition to these grotesques there are some animals which it will be safer to leave unclassified. Looking into the chancel is one of those controversial "low-side" windows. The double piscinæ is quite remarkable. The pillar at its corner angle has gone, but the groined roof canopy and the fluted basin with pendant to the drain are beautiful in design. The brackets of the black oak roof also are finely carved with figures supporting shields.

A very bright and intelligent youth was doing the honours of the church and showing a companion cyclist the principal things of note, and he seemed to be not a little proud of the knowledge he was imparting. He went to some considerable pains to unearth his father's signature in the visitors' book, and so overjoyed was he when he found it, that the place was carefully left open so that even strangers might participate in the reflected glory. Proceeding now towards Turvey in joining the main road, which is situated close upon the border of the county, we get again more among the hills. The approach

to the town (or rather village, to be correct) is beneath an avenue of trees. This air of distinction is endorsed by the well-built, uniform, and prosperous-looking dwellings. Among these are the grounds of a many-gabled mansion standing back from the road. It is mainly Elizabethan or Early Jacobean, though the window-sashes are not at all in character, but buttresses intervene and break up the otherwise monotonous lines. This is Turvey Abbey, portions of which are said to go back to pre-Reformation times. The lands hereabouts in former years belonged to the noble family of Mordaunt, and a visit to the church will reveal their once importance. The marble altar tomb of Sir John, who died three years before the accession of Henry VIII., represents the knight in pointed Gothic armour and wearing the collar of SS. His hair is dressed in female flowing style with fringe, and his head reclines upon his tilting heaume, which is crested over with a fearsome open-mouthed monster. Sir John's wife, Edith Latimer, lies at his side, and is robed in clinging gown and coif, and her tresses, enclosed in network, take the turban fashion. More magnificent is the lofty monument of their son, the first Baron, with the huge Mordaunt arms above. The effigies in alabaster of this lord and his lady (who was Elizabeth de Vere) rest upon an altar tomb.

The more rounded lines of the knight's suit of armour bring us to the mid sixteenth-century fashion, the Lady Elizabeth having the familiar angular head-dress pointed like the gable of a cottage which Henry's many wives affected. Like his sire, this John's head rests upon a similar uncomfortable pillow, the adorning crest taking the form of an Eastern head. His feet are placed upon his gauntlets, which is a change after the everlasting lions and dogs, the favourite monumental footstools. This Baron has decidedly handsome features, the straight line of nose and forehead being distinctly of the Grecian type. These effigies are supported by dansels with more than well-developed busts. It was Elizabeth de Vere who brought the stately seat of Drayton to the Mordaunts, and it was her son, the second Lord, who built the greater part of that grand old Northamptonshire house, which in Queen Anne's reign passed through an heiress, Lady Mary Mordaunt, to Sir John Germaine, and thence into the Sackville family, Dukes of Dorset. The second Mordaunt Baron, John, died within nine years of his predecessor. His canopied tomb in the north aisle displays his effigy in armour, with a wife upon an altar tomb on either side (a FitzLewis and a Fermor). The costumes of the ladies are well worth study.

The third Lord Mordaunt, who died in 1601, has a plain altar tomb with shields of arms. His successor, the Parliamentary General, was created Earl of Peterborough. He died in the early stages of the Civil War, and his widow quitted Drayton for Reigate Priory (where Evelyn speaks of visiting her) to make way for Henry, the second Earl of Peterborough, who acted the difficult part of proxy in the second marriage of James II.; for between Pope and Parliament Peterborough's position was one that required more than ordinary diplomacy and tact. It was the daughter of this Earl by Penelope O'Brien who brought Drayton to the Sackvilles. His younger brother John, created Viscount Mordaunt in 1659, was one of the most active of the Royalists who plotted to restore Charles II. to his throne. He and Wilmot were ever getting into scrapes, and, when out of them, plunging into fresh schemes; but he lived to welcome the King back upon his arrival at Dover in 1660.

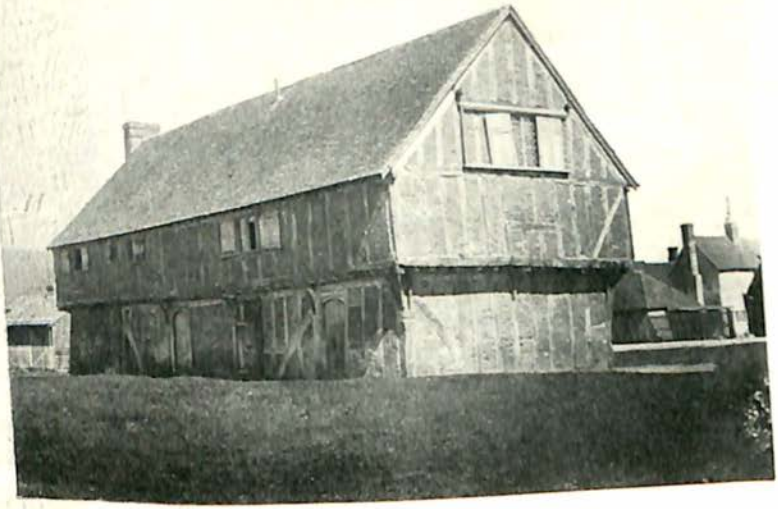
Charles Mordaunt, third Earl of Peterborough, son of the Royalist, succeeded upon his uncle's death in 1697. Unlike his father and uncle, however, he left the Stuarts in the lurch and went over with the majority of turncoats to Dutch William, whom he served valiantly. His friend Swift has immortalised his prowess. This "Great Earl" as

a wit could hold his own with the most sparkling wits of the day. His reply when mistaken by an angry crowd for the Duke of Marlborough is a good example of his ready tact. "My friends," he said, "I will prove to you that I am not his Grace by two unmistakable signs. Firstly, I have but five pounds in my pocket, and, secondly, they are very much at your service." In the choice of his two wives he showed his appreciation and susceptibility to beauty. Kneller's full-length portrait of his first Countess, Carey Fraser, daughter of Charles II.'s physician, may be seen on the walls of Hampton Court. His second spouse was no less known to fame, and the aged Earl courting the lovely actress Anastasia Robinson in Golden Square has a decided flavour of romance, and for many reasons Georgian society of his time never dreamed that the little opera-singer residing modestly with her mother in a cottage in Parson's Green was the rightful mistress of the neighbouring lordly mansion of Peterborough House.

The remains of the Peterborough Earls lie buried in a vault beneath the organ on the left-hand side of Turvey chancel. The space occupied by this gorgeously decorated instrument was once the burial chapel of the family. Their decay brought with it the advent of the Higgins, who

appear to have made a bit of a rival flourish in the monumental line, for the huge and heavy mausoleum adorned with scriptural inscription cut out as an open balustrade, erected by them in Turvey churchyard, is duly impressive if hideously ugly. By all appearances the materials of the older mansion, which occupied the site of the present Turvey House, were used in its construction, for an unmistakable Tudor fireplace has been incorporated in that colossal semi-Elizabethan receptacle for the dead.

Not many years ago funds were sadly needed for patching up the stately Mordaunt tombs; all other Mordaunt interests and affairs long since had been forgotten. The collateral descendants of such a weighty family must be considerable, but apparently application was not made in the right quarter, for the reply that came was by no means encouraging. "So far as the writer was concerned," came the reply, "the church authorities might break up the Mordaunt monuments and mend the roads with them!" If the *richer* classes of the present day who now dwell in so many of the ancestral abodes of the *upper* classes, only could purchase monuments with their estates that could be passed off as their own ancestors, how willingly would they disburse for their upkeep. But these old tombs are necessarily the property of the old



Moot Hall, Elstow

Old House, Shefford

families who once flourished in the land, and so they in less flourishing times fall into ruin—that is to say, provided progressive schemes of church improvement have suffered them to remain.

A sketch of Turvey Church made in the reign of George IV. shows the high old manorial pew. The helmets, gauntlets, and spurs which overhung one of the tombs twenty years ago have vanished also. The sturdy oak doors with ornamental curved hinges and weird handles resembling the hilts of Elizabethan swords remain *in situ*, and by the side of the entrance is the projecting holy-water stoup. The poor old weathercock, with the date 1630 cut out upon his body, now hangs head-downwards, dejected and forlorn, upon a clothes'-peg in a lumber-room—a considerable come down from his once exalted state.

Near the village smithy is "Nell's Well," a natural spring, the outlet of which has an alcove of modern masonry. But who was Nell? We made inquiries, but nobody knew anything, and an aged man who had lived in Turvey all his years could only say that "she was old ancient"—information not altogether gratifying. Probably, like many "wishing" wells in various remote parts of England, Nell's particular property possessed the power of preventing unwelcome courtship. In this case, all the mother of the lady who was

receiving unwelcome attentions had to do was to write the swain's name upon a pebble and drop it into the water, saying an Ave backwards. Result, a severe seizure of lumbago which kept the gentleman in bed for weeks.

Maybe that "Jonah," whose rheumaticy-looking effigy stands in the river facing Turvey Bridge, was such a victim, for that watery position is decidedly suggestive of the ailment which catches you suddenly in the back, and a worse penance than the less draughty stomach of a whale. Jonah in his way is as mysterious as Nell. He looks as aged and weather-worn as the fine old bridge itself that spans the Ouse, and as the bridge ends the village, he greets the eastward traveller and bids the westward one adieu. At the eastern end the first house encountered going Bedford way stands an ancient hostelry, "The Three Fishes," one of whose overhanging gables proclaims the date, 1624. The ample porch is cosy and inviting, and is supported by massive pillars of oak, forming with the bridge background quite an old-world picture. The suggestiveness of the pictorial sign of three plump specimens (trout, perhaps) in combination with the promising presence of Jonah, the seduction of cetacean sport must induce many piscators to try their luck at Turvey.

CHAPTER III

SOUTH NORTHANTS

Now Bedfordshire is left behind. Four miles across the most northern part of Bucks, through Cold Brafield and Lavendon, and we are in Northamptonshire.

The south-eastern side of the county which we strike is diversified and well wooded, and the villages and the churches particularly in this valley of the Nene are full of interest. InYardley Chase, which lies to the left of the road, every variety of tree may be studied: the main avenue which crosses the Chase runs northward to the great gates of Castle Ashby. The villages of Yardley Hastings and Easton Maudit are as old-fashioned as their mediæval-sounding names would lead one to suppose.

At the former the church is perched high, with the old Manor House by its side. The Early

English doorway in the church porch contains its original door of unvarnished oak, white with age. Its handles of various dates should be proof sufficient that for wear there is nothing so enduring as wood. There is little to note within except an array of funereal hatchments; the oldest monument, however, only dates back to the time of William III. The older portion of the Manor House, creeper-clad and somewhat ruinous, reveals some very early work in the construction of its stone doors and windows, but this block nearest to the churchyard looks like a poor and aged relation to the modern remainder.

The church of Easton Maudit, a couple of miles to the north-east, is altogether a finer building than its neighbour Yardley. The tower has a graceful and lofty octagonal spire with angle turrets. There are some fine canopied monuments to the ancient family of Yelverton, once upon a time Earls of Sussex, whose arms are painted upon a wooden tablet, with rampant lions depicted on a faded blue ground, close to which hangs a Yelverton helmet, sword, and gauntlets. Sir Christopher and Sir Henry were Judge and Attorney-General to James I., and here they lie in state robed in red. There is the usual array of kneeling children: the girls wearing more than ordinarily starched ruffs round neck and waist,

and rosettes in their brushed-back coiffures. Their tutor, Thomas Morton, Bishop of Durham, is also buried here. He died at the age of ninety-five, the year before the Restoration, having been treated harshly in the interregnum on account of his sportive tendencies in the reign of James I. There are two portraits of this prelate in St. John's, Cambridge, of which College he was a Fellow.

The famous old mansion Castle Ashby is close at hand, but its Tudor and Jacobean architecture has little of the castle in appearance. It is of the same character as Hatfield minus the turrets, or Bramshill minus the gables; and the sculptured Roman-lettered balustrade reminds one of that fine old Yorkshire house, Temple Balsall, but being constructed of stone one misses the rich Elizabethan red brick. This well-known historic show-house calls for no particular mention here, nor do the lovely gardens, the terrace walks, or superb wrought-iron gates. Such particulars must be sought for in the local guide-books. In the picture galleries the visages of the various valorous Comptons look out of their several frames. William, first Earl of Northampton, in crimson ermine triumphal robes, Privy Councillor and courtier to Elizabeth, James, and Charles I.; Spencer, the Royalist second Earl, who was killed

at Hopton Heath in 1643; and James, the third Earl, both clad in armour. The last attended Charles II. on his entry into London in 1660. Henry, the Protestant Bishop at the time of the Revolution, raised troops for the Princess Anne's protection. Sir John, whose runaway daughter is said to have got clear of Canonbury Tower in a baker's basket, is also here. Leaving the Comptons, we can find not far away the Achilles of England, John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, who came off victorious in forty battles. Over the tomb of his Countess in the old Cathedral of St. Paul's hung a replica of this picture. It fortunately survived the Great Fire, and is now in the Heralds' College. Most gruesome of all the portraits is Vandyck's "Steenie," painted after the proud nobleman had been stabbed by the assassin Felton.

Art in the way of sculpture and carving is well represented also in the church of Castle Ashby. The pulpit was the work of Inigo Jones, who designed the Jacobean additions to the mansion. The finest tombs, however, are modern Italian work. Of village there is scarcely any: a farm or so and a Temperance Hotel.

More romantically situated is the village of Whiston close by, to the north-west of Ashby, also a tiny village of a few old-fashioned cot-

tages, a farm or two, and vicarage. The church is right away, and requires a stiff climb to get up to it, reminding one of the ascent to the Castle of Heidelberg on a modest scale. Place House, one of the farms standing back in a meadow, has the distinction of having been once a moated residence of King John, and this notoriety has been its ruin, for some big mansion in the neighbourhood has carried away most of its architectural characteristics, leaving nothing behind at all out of the way. The entire interest of Whiston is centred in its church, a fine specimen of pure Perpendicular. The lofty tower with crocketed turrets at the angles has an exceptional display of grinning gargoyles. Not only are they assembled on the summit, but all the way up. So many and to spare monkeys are there that a couple contest the privilege of holding one particular spout halfway up the tower.

Upon entering the church one is struck by the paucity of benches, the width of space between them, and the cathedral-like uniformity and balance—a peculiarity quite unique in its way. And this is no modern arrangement either, for the benches are the original sixteenth-century ones, with uncomfortably narrow seats and finely moulded divisions. A mural monument on the left-hand side of the chancel is to a Catesby, a

member of which family founded the church in 1534. The Queen Anne costumes worn by the female figures standing out in high relief beneath the busts of Catesby and his wife (who was a Ferrers) wear the lofty, ungainly head-dress and farthingale of the period. A still-born babe in wrappings like a bambino is being presented with a skull by a Cupid.

Opposite this monument are two very graceful sculptured groups by Nollekins, to members of the Irby family. It was one of these Irbys who presented the church with its bells. When the building of the holy edifice was completed, no money was left for these necessary appendages, and so the "spotted sheep"—an ancient institution or race belonging to the Irbys—had to be disposed of. The first day the bells were rung the benefactor called his better-half to his side. "Come, Isabel," he said, "listen to the sheep-bells." "Nay, love," replied the lady, "but how can that be when the sheep are sold?" And then she was enlightened as to the reason of her lord and master selling the flock. Those who may be sceptical about the tradition have but to look around to see descendants of those "spotted" sheep grazing in the meadows which slant downwards towards the village. Whether the Whiston bells were duly baptised is not recorded, for it

was the custom in old times to do so. Pennant speaks of the christening of a church bell with solemn ceremony.

A more striking contrast in style of architecture between the church towers of Whiston and Earls Barton, about two miles to the north of it, could not readily be found. The latter church also stands on high ground, and from the top of the tower a magnificent view is obtained, in which the main road may be seen running from Wellingborough to Northampton, with the River Nene to the south of it running a parallel course. Earls Barton Church dates back many centuries earlier than Whiston; indeed, it is one of the most perfect specimens we have of Saxon architecture. The ornamentation of vertical lines formed by narrow projecting bands of stone adds lightness to the massiveness of the tower, unrelieved as it is by buttresses. The embellishments of arcading at the base of the second, and the diamond design on the third stage, as also the open window arch divided by substantial balusters of the belfry above, have distinct personality and peculiarity. Norman and later styles are discernible in other portions of the church, but the tower is unique.

And now we must dip a little to the south so as to avoid unlovely and depressing Northampton, whose famous Round Church and still more

famous Eleanor Cross are its only redeeming points. Supposing, then, we return to the sylvan glades of Yardley Chase and bear in a south-westerly direction Towcester way.

In the church of the first village, Horton, is the tomb of William Lord Parr, the uncle of Henry VIII.'s last Queen, on whose Royal marriage he was raised to the peerage and appointed her chamberlain. By some accounts she was born at Greens Norton, which is about twelve miles from here to the south-west; by other accounts she first saw light at Kendal Castle. So many people famous in the pages of history are privileged with two or more birthplaces at widely opposite points of the compass. Still in some cases there is excuse for this. To quote two instances: there are two distinct and well-authenticated skulls of Cromwell in existence, and everybody has heard of the showman who exhibited a small and a large skull of Shakespeare: one when he was a man and one when he was a boy. But to return to William Lord Parr and his stately monument, the alabaster effigies of himself and wife are exquisitely sculptured. She was a Salusbury of Horton, other members of which ancient family are represented by fifteenth-century brasses in the chancel. Horton Manor House is a heavy Georgian struc-

ture with classic portico and pillars. The earlier mansion after Lord Parr's death passed into the hands of his eldest daughter, and from her to the Lanes, Chetwodes, and Montagues, and has now after all this genealogical distinction degenerated into a boarding-house! A member of the Salusbury family was the Royalist Colonel William, who fought under Prince Rupert, and to whom Charles I., just before his death, sent his skull-cap with the pathetic message that it was "the only token of remembrance he could bestow."

To the south and south-west of Horton the verdant enchantments of Yardley Chase extend through Horton Woods and "Salsey Forest," until we find ourselves at Wold Hartwell, close upon the border-line of Bucks. A cluster of delightful villages to the north-west are well worth visiting. At the first of these, Courteenhall, we are completely in the wilds, and one might travel far and wide before alighting upon anything so rustic and peaceful and yet so prosperous-looking as this little assembly of thatched cottages enveloped in flowers, with the harmonious setting of surrounding hills and their ever-welcome peeps of purple, violet, or blue. These cottages are by no means placed in formal rows, but have quite a West of England abandonment of arrangement, and, what is better still, no hedges to obliterate

the open and extensive view. Nor could anything be more picturesque than the moss-grown rough stone footway clambering up towards the church. It was Sunday afternoon when we reached this fascinating village, and, as the church was locked, application had to be made to one of those cosy thatched cottages. The sexton, fortunately, was at home partaking of tea in the bosom of his family (and a remarkably pretty family too!) It seemed a sin to drag him away from his cheerful surroundings, but it was one of those places where the keys and their keeper do not part company, and so there was nothing for it but a temporary break-up of the homely meal. Though externally the church appeared to be in its normal condition, the opened door revealed the fact that the restorer was (that is to say, excepting Sunday) hard at work making a clean sweep of the inside. The stone pillars of the nave, in the absence of nearly everything else, made themselves inordinately conspicuous—perhaps to call attention to the variety and independent personality of their capitals. The roof was said by our cicerone to be as old as the font, but as that dates from the tenth century, one may feel inclined to be a little sceptical. A glance around shows that the Wakes are the great people of Courteenhall. The present Sir Herewald is the thirteenth Baron: the very

name, suggestive of Kingsley, flavours of mediævalism. May the line continue long in the land, if only to guard the unspoiled rural beauty and felicity of so charming a spot.

Here, as in most other peaceful haunts of men in our beloved Island, the cry is the same: "What is the country coming to?"—to think that the great in the land who so generously befriend their dependants and villagers should be threatened with the loss of their lands. That these ancient possessions, held long and honourably, should be mapped out anew on distinctly dishonest democratic lines! Go where you will and make inquiries among the rural parts of England, the spirit of old Toryism is far from dead.

In the north aisle of Courteenhall Church is a marble altar tomb to Sir Samuel Jones, of the time of Charles II., whose kneeling figure looks as if he were paying his addresses in the highly polished manner of the period. The recipient of these courtly attentions is his wife, who was a Mary Middleton, and her daughter presumably married a Wake.

Another monument, denuded of its brasses, has the following jocular and rather puzzling epitaph:

"A Sallops Oseley I,
A ruen Partrige woonne,
No birds I had her by,

Such worck with her was doonne;
She dead, I turtle sought,
A Wake in Salsie bred;
Twice five birds shee me brought:
Shee lyv's, but I am dead.
But when ninth year was come,
I sleapt, that was a Wake;
So yeildig to Death's doome,
Did here my lodgig take."

"Salsie" is the forest-land through which we have passed, which really belongs to Hartwell parish to the south. The Wakes properly belong to Blisworth, to the west of Courteenhall, where may be seen the tomb of the lord of the manor, Roger Wake, who departed this life when Henry IV. was King.

Courteen Hall or Courteenhall House is one of those square, heavy-looking Georgian structures with vast and classic stabling. It came as a surprise to find upon the map a railway station at no great distance from this out-of-the-world spot. You look about for a road, and find a village so named close at hand.

Richard, the son of the before-mentioned Roger Wake, lies buried in this church of Roade, with his two wives. A stunted round tower of massive construction facing a farmstead called "The Hyde" may without question be said to belong to his time. It was the Manor House of Roade,

belonging to the Augustinian Abbey of Duston (near Northampton), founded by William the Conqueror's natural son, William Peverell.

Before proceeding further westward towards Towcester, we may as well dip down a mile or so to Ashton and Grafton Regis, halting at the former to inspect the cross-legged wooden Crusader, Sir Philip le Lou, and the alabaster effigy of Sir John de Herteshull, who died in 1365.

At the peaceful, verdant village of Grafton, on the Great North Road, we are once more hob-a-nob with royalty, for in the church of St. Mary rests the knightly parent of Edward IV.'s Queen, Elizabeth Woodville, or Wideville, the mother of Henry VII.'s consort. Sir Richard is represented life size in plate and chain mail, and the sides of the tomb beneath the incised slab are wrought with a graceful Gothic design. The secret marriage of the young and impetuous Yorkist monarch, which was solemnised at Grafton, has all the elements of romance. Accident threw the beauteous young widow in the way of the susceptible Edward after a day's hunting in the adjacent Whittlebury Forest, and, according to local tradition, a very venerable oak-tree, still standing, witnessed the preliminaries of the troth plight. The ancient chroniclers, truly, say nothing

of this historic tree, "The Queen's Oak," which, notwithstanding the disfigurement by a fire that threatened its entire destruction ten years ago, looks, in its hedgerow skirting the present park enclosure, as hale and hearty as the excellent old Duke himself, who has fortunately survived so many recent accidents. But chroniclers of old missed many such landmarks in their prosaic records. They, however, did not overlook the fact that the Monarch's infatuation had no idea of matrimony in view, and that overtures were made much the same as to the unfortunate Jane Shore. All such proposals being of no avail, upon a joyful May-day (in 1464) the King rode over from his Palace at Stony Stratford (which later on he vacated in favour of Grafton), and only in presence of the priest and a boy assistant and the bride's mother-in-law, the Duchess of Bedford, the happy pair were united. For some time afterwards the marriage remained a secret, and the Woodvilles waited in patience, but when, after the lapse of four months, Edward summoned courage to "face the music," then the family reaped benefits wholesale. It may not be uninteresting to note that some eight years ago a lock of hair of this popular but astute Monarch appeared in a London sale room. It was a portion of the long brown tresses found when the King's tomb in St.

George's Chapel, Windsor, was opened in 1789.

But Grafton has royal associations other than the Woodville connection, for in the north chapel of the church were interred some of the Fitz-Roys, Dukes of Grafton, of Stuart descent, whose monuments are principally confined to Euston, their seat in Suffolk. As in the case of the Mordaunts of Turvey, the organ now occupies the burial-place. In the chancel is a fine carved oak arm-chair, which in all probability came originally from the Northamptonshire seat of the Fitz-Roys close by, and in that case it is more than likely that the august parent of the family has honoured it with patronage.

The original Manor House was visited by several monarchs, including Queen Elizabeth, who stayed here during one of her Progresses. The royal demesne of Grafton, however, once famous for its extensive deer park and magnificent oak avenues, has degenerated into a very ordinary looking dwelling, the outbuildings and stabling of which, by all appearances, is the oldest part of it. The mansion, like so many others during the Civil War, was fortified by the Royalists, but capitulated, and then Cromwell's soldiers made short work of it. The second Charles must have found particular satisfaction in

creating his Dukedom from a place where the Protector's name would have remained triumphant after the kingly traditions of the Middle Ages.

Wakefield Lodge, the Northamptonshire seat of the Dukes of Grafton, which lies two or three miles to the south of the village in Whittlebury Forest, where English monarchs used to hunt, also in itself is a reminder of Royalist triumph, for the original house was built by John Claypole, Cromwell's son-in-law. The present building, however, is one of Kent's unbeautiful structures.

The first Duke of Grafton, Lady Castlemaine's second son, Henry Fitz-Roy, was a handsomer man than even his half-brother Monmouth, whom he fought against at the time of the latter's insurrection. But, like Marlborough, Grafton turned traitor on the landing of the Prince of Orange, and two years later was mortally wounded fighting valiantly on William's side at the siege of Cork.

Taking now the main road northwards, and crossing Stoke Bridge over the river Tove (which dividing Northants from Bucks here flows westward to Towcester), Stoke Park is found on the high ground to the left. The Jacobean mansion (a great part of which was consumed by fire together with some priceless old masters twenty-seven years ago) was built by Sir Francis Crane,

who acted as host to Charles I. on several occasions. Sir Francis is famous for starting tapestry manufacture at Mortlake. The patronage both of King James and Charles set the fashion for the nobility. But "gold hangings and silk limnings" and anything artistic and beautiful were looked upon by the Puritans as superstitious luxuries, and so "Tapestry House," better known as the King's Works at Mortlake, came with the Civil War to an untimely end.

To this short-lived tapestry industry, in addition to lining the walls of some of our most famous old Halls, we owe the possession of Raphael's famous cartoons painted for the Vatican tapestry. That little appreciated art patron, Charles I., made the purchase of them for Sir Francis Crane's weavers at Mortlake.

Stoke Bruerne village is picturesquely situated. The church stands high above and aloof from the snug thatched cottages, and commands a glorious view. Within are some oak stalls and "poppy-head" bench-ends. A squint on the right-hand side of the chancel reveals the immense thickness of the masonry. Both aisles have piscinæ. That of the south has next to it a very perfect aumbry, with the original hinges and lock upon its ancient oaken door. The vestry is an addition, but a fine carved chest within it is worth notice.

There is no monument to the knight of tapestry fame, but the brass of a contemporary rector, the Rev. Richard Lightfoot, in clerical gown and ruff, remains in the chancel. A Wentworth heiress, the lady (Henrietta, daughter of the last Earl of Strafford of the re-created title, who must not be confused with her Toddington namesake of an earlier generation) to whom the manor descended through the Arundels, married a Staffordshire Vernon, and to that family it still belongs.

In the hamlet of Shutlehanger, about a mile westward from Stoke Bruerne, standing back in a field, is an old house with early English gateway, flanked on either side by immense projecting buttresses. There are blocked-up windows of the same period, and in the porch is a good vaulted roof. Later additions have been added in red brick, which with the older stonework makes an admirable subject for the sketch-book. The general effect of colour when we saw it was enhanced by the patches of golden lichen and clusters of more vivid marigolds standing out against the hazy violet of the distant hills. The position of the sun, as well as a tantalising slanting foreground, defied all efforts with the camera, conditions which seemed to say, "Black and white will never do me justice. I must be immortalised in colour, or not at all." This neglected old place,

now occupied by cottagers, is said to have been once the residence of a Cistercian nunnery.

At Shutlehanger we are near the boundary of the park of Easton Neston, the noble old seat of the Fermors. The name naturally recalls the belle of London society early in the eighteenth century, the beautiful Arabella, the "Belinda" of Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, the daughter of Squire Fermor of Tusmore, who in 1715 became the wife of Francis Perkins, of Ufton Court, in southern Berkshire. The most brilliant mock-heroic poem, it will be recalled, was a satire upon a lover's quarrel which, originating in a ringlet being stolen by the swain, resulted in deadly animosity between the Fermors and the Petres.

The mansion is a fine example of the Italian school of architecture by Wren and his pupil Hawksmoor, the chief characteristics of which are a formal array of tall windows intersected by columns, with an open balustrade above to complete the vertical scheme. Were the building constructed of red brick in place of stone, the later portion of Hampton Court would be suggested. The lofty apartments are mostly hung with tapestry, and one may infer that the pioneer of the looms at Mortlake supplied the earlier house of Easton. Subdued hues of blue and green pervade with rich and seductive but somewhat sombre

effect. Full-length portraits adorn the hall, Vandycks mostly, which are never otherwise than aristocratic in form and feature. Among these is a Fermor as St. John the Baptist, such as Monmouth is represented by Lely at Dalkeith Palace. In passing from room to room, the original doors with ornamental hinges attract attention. Many of the ceilings are painted. That of the drawing-room has figures in high relief and mural paintings framed in ornamental designs. Looking out of the tall windows of the tapestried bedrooms, a long formal stretch of water again calls to mind Hampton Court. The piers to be seen of an ancient gateway with alcove niches are doubtless remnants of the older arrangements, such as one sees in Kip's engravings.

Although the first Countess Pomfret, in 1755, half denuded the mansion of its ancient paintings by bequeathing them to Oxford University, there are many fine ones left. In the gallery Lord Pomfret's portrait presides with jovial face over a rather mixed assembly of grandees, among whom the great Duke of Marlborough is conspicuous. His Grace's flaxen wig stands out against the background of horse and groom. Not far away pouts his self-conscious Duchess, posing with her hand to her forehead, and dressed in green and blue flowing raiment. From another frame looks

forth a mild physiognomy very like Judge Jeffreys, and the great Reynolds is represented by a matronly lady of noble presence, the aforesaid generous Countess possibly. And here in red robes is Philip, Lord Wharton of Winchendon, the barony of which is still under attainder—the notorious Duke who died in 1731 leaving no legitimate issue. In another room some of Lely's "beauties" sit in stilted attitudes. Nell Gwyn's sleepy expression promises but little capacity for wit, and another blonde who sits *vis-à-vis* looks by far the sprightlier of the two. But the subtle harmonies of blue in the former picture attract the eye before the personal charms of either. A portrait of Sir Hatton Fermor recalls his monument in the church, so let us stroll from the mansion into the sacred edifice close by to look at this well-groomed Cavalier in armour and top boots, standing by the side of his wife, who was the Lady Anne Cockaine before her marriage. Between them is a bewigged Fermor, the heir of Sir Hatton probably. His sisters, in praying attitude, are shown above. On the other side of the chancel are the recumbent effigies in alabaster of Sir George Fermor, in armour, and his wife, Dame Mary Curzon, wearing a wonderful head-dress; their prodigious family, seven sons and eight daughters, are also there in chromatic order. Going back a

couple of generations or so, we find Sir John and his wife, Maud Vaux, who figured in Elizabeth's reign, and brasses of their predecessors, plain Richard Fermor and Anne Browne, his wife. A "three-decker" pulpit and snug high pews are quite in character with all else at this secluded manorial church. The beauteous Arabella immortalised by Pope, of course, was buried with her husband at Ufton Nervet. She died in 1738. Judging by a portrait of her at Tusmore, she lacks strength of character if one may go by a weak and receding chin. Lord Herries' miniature of her belonged to one of her rejected lovers, a Wakeman, whose dismissal was soothed by this gift from the fair charmer's hands.

The compact little town of Towcester has nothing of the dreariness of "booty" Northampton. The proximity of Easton Neston doubtless gives it tone and culture. Here is the famous "Saracen's Head" of *Pickwick*, but since that immortal narrative was written the house has become more aristocratic, and wishing to change early Victorian associations for something more refined, it is now "The Pomfret Arms." But more historic is the "Talbot," whose Queen Anne exterior faces the main road, for here Charles I. slept in October, 1642, and the carved oak chair in which he sat upon this occasion is there to this day.

In the fine old church is the monument of another Fermor—Hierome and his wife Jane, who dwelt peacefully together for forty-two years, the former having "attained ye honor of a great grand uncle," departed this life in the year 1602. His punning epitaph cannot be said to be exactly brilliant, and is a little involved:

> "Hereone thy joyes all shine on the,
> Thy faith and truth did shine before.
> Jane lived thine and will so be
> All praise thy life, thy life Farmore."

The figures of this happy pair kneel at a desk beneath a double arch, over which are the Fermor (or Farmor, as sometimes spelled) arms in colour. Less pleasing to contemplate is the effigy of an ecclesiastic in cassock and hood, for his mummified figure lying beneath, if it points to the ultimate end of humanity, is rather horrifying, and one turns with relief to the grotesque figures that form the corbels of the arches, one of whom with long-tailed head-dress of the Middle Ages possibly represents a jester. In the south aisle are several chained books in black letter.

Many of the villages that are situated between Towcester and Banbury are well worth visiting. Tiny Slapton seems to have no connection with our present go-ahead times. The worshippers in the little church, to be in harmony with their

old-fashioned surroundings, should wear knee-breeches and frilled shirts, and poke-bonnets, high combs, and mittens. A peep within that rustic crumbling porch, and you have a picture just as Prout would have drawn. A rugged old font of very early date, with its extinguisher cover, is planted in an irregular brick floor. On one side are miniature dilapidated box-pews; on the other, the Squire's more roomy quarters divided off with oaken balustraded screen. You venture further in, awaiting the shock—the dis-illusion of modern arrangement, and are quite agreeably surprised to find the general character of the rest to be the same. A queer old desk in the chancel has a Bible attached to it by a chain. Such ancient tomes nowadays are not worth steal-ing, and if anything offered temptation it would rather be the desk, so since old times things are strangely reversed.

And this brings the thought: how much more necessary it is in the twentieth century to securely chain the monumental armour of ancient tombs. These helmets have a way of getting into private collections, no one can say how. A dealer pur-chases in ignorance a specimen of some rare type of casque or heaulme, and sells again to the col-lector. It is the business of neither to inquire into the various vicissitudes of the intermediate

stages of transmission. Well, there are no helmets at Slapton, so this lament perhaps is out of place.

The chancel is divided from the nave by a stone archway with mullioned openings on either side. Some of the old bench-ends have moulded tops and carved panels, and on the north and south walls are some quaint frescoes of people with well-developed foreheads and sufficient length of neck to satisfy the admirers of the Rossetti elongated type of beauty. There are also mermaids and fishes and other specimens of natural and unnatural history.

At Wappenham, to the south-west of Slapton, are memorials to the Lovetts of Astwell and the Billings of Bittlesden. Their fifteenth and sixteenth century brasses afford good studies of costume, in particular the winged and pedimental head-dress of the wives of Sir Thomas Billing, Chief Justice of the time of Edward IV.; and of Thomas Lovett, who died in 1492. A niche for a saint on the right-hand side of the chancel arch is of beautiful design, but is utterly spoiled by over-restoration.

Astwell Castle stands aloof from the road across some meadows. At the back of the old water-mill is a picturesque reed-grown stretch of water, and beyond on the higher ground may be seen the grey tower and gables of this fine old

Tudor building. Viewed from this distance, it looks quite like a bit of Haddon, but nearer inspection shows two distinct styles: the more grim Early Tudor of the tower, and the homelier-looking present dwelling portion with the usual Elizabethan gables and mullions. Some curious carved oak-work over the entrance gate is dated 1638, and above that, upon a shield of arms, is the year 1607, yet neither of these can be accepted as the period when the building was erected.

You clamber up a spiral staircase in the width of wall. Narrow stone doorways lead into little alcoves with deep-set widows, which speak eloquently of the necessity of defence. You pass a bare and deserted room where a Countess of Huntingdon was born, and, climbing the worn stone steps, pass other dismal chambers shorn of every sign of ornament or comfort, and at length alight upon the roof to admire the view of the surrounding country. This is very fine in its way, but the old kitchen, with open-timbered roof adorned with sides of bacon, set up a more entertaining train of thought of the honest, old-fashioned rough-and-ready days now as extinct as the Dodo. But we had forgotten for the moment the grand type of old gentleman-farmer who lives here, and for half a century or more has been famous for his pedigree sheep and cattle. He

Abbey Ruins, Elstow

Astwell Castle

belongs to that good old stock now, alas! but rarely met with. Sadly did he deplore the modern times—the Liberal Government, insurance schemes, "wild women," and like disasters. The gassy exponents of Socialistic measures should go into the really rural districts to learn a few home truths.

But a few miles from here would bring us to Sulgrave, where lived the ancestors of the American patriot whose armorial shields which originated the Stars and Stripes of the national flag may be seen in the porch of the rather shabby-looking Manor House. But it would be superfluous to describe so well known a place of Washingtonian pilgrimage.

By way of the hamlet of Fawcote, leaving Radstone to the left, the house and church of Steane are discovered in a sheltered valley off the main road running between the towns of Brackley and Banbury. For many centuries this ancient mansion belonged to the Crewes and Spencers, and before this time it was the residence of Sir Reginald Bray, the knight who placed the crown upon the head of Henry at Bosworth Field.[1] Until comparatively recently Steane House remained in its picturesque and unaltered condition, but of late years considerable alterations

[1] *Vide, Old World Places.*

have been effected, so that one has to look about among the outbuildings and offices to find the older parts. The pretty and distinctly uncommon Jacobean church in the park grounds near the mansion is, however, full of interest. The little building is practically disused, for but half a dozen services are held in it throughout the year. For the rest of the time those misguided and ill-advised mice who chance to enter in the search for food are as little disturbed as the Crewes who slumber beneath the mouldering tombs. Among much display of monumental magnificence was a group of three mouse-traps temptingly baited with cheese, and when those nervous and nimble feet stray into the sacred precincts there is really nothing else to tackle, for the crimson velvet coverings which graced the Chapel Royal, St. James's, in Charles II.'s time, and afterwards removed here, are carefully locked away with his Merry Majesty's Bible and Prayer Book, and William III.'s Prayer Books also, which are gorgeously bound and bear the Royal insignia. A queer old pulpit arises above high-walled box-pews containing antiquated rush-seated tall-backed chairs.

Upon the further side of folding ornamental gates shutting off the south aisle, or Crewe chapel, is found a fund of solid material to

ruminate upon. The ancestral dignity of the Crewes is stamped on every side, and aloft hang the tattered banners, helmets, gauntlets, and other funereal and martial relics.

Upon the iron railing enclosure of one of the monuments hangs a wooden hand, which held a gauntlet, a portion also of a rusty helmet. Within the railings two cupids are lamenting the loss of Thomas, second Lord Crewe, Baron of Steane, who died towards the close of the seventeenth century. Near by is a tablet in memory of his parents, the aged John, Baron of Steane (who was raised to the peerage at the coronation of Charles II.), and his Lady Jemima, both of whom died in that reign. Pepys in his *Diary* has a good deal to say about this couple, with whom he was on very friendly terms, frequently dining with them in their house in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The Lady Jemima is referred to as a weak, silly, and rather saintly woman. The diarist speaks of taking their grandchildren to see the lions at the Tower, which reads quite like a modern jaunt to the Zoo.

The effigies of John's predecessor, Sir Thomas Crewe and Lady Temperance, lie beneath a pinnacled canopy of marble. He leans on his side, his head resting on his hand, while his wife reclines full length. Above are the Crewe arms in coloured marbles, with symbolic skull and hour-

glass as on the Belvoir tombs at Bottesford. The bust of Temperance, the daughter of Sir Thomas, arises from her tomb to the call of the last trump heralded by an angel. Her many virtues are set forth in lengthy detail. She died in 1634, aged twenty-five. Another monument supporting trophies is that of Nathaniel Crewe, the Prelate who, notwithstanding the opposition of Parliament, united James II. to his second Queen, and, remaining constant to them in misfortune, was excepted from William III.'s general pardon, though permitted to retain his Bishopric. His portrait hangs in the Hall of Lincoln College, Oxford. He succeeded to the title in 1697, exemplifying the first instance in the country of the combination of a spiritual and a temporal peerage. His wife, also buried here, was the famous beauty, Dorothy Forster, sister to the Jacobite General, Thomas Forster, of Bamborough Castle, who, after Preston fight, narrowly saved his life by escaping to the Continent. His romantically situated fortress on the Northumberland coast came into the hands of his brother-in-law the Bishop, by whose noble bequest Bamborough for ever is on the look-out with the purpose of befriending vessels in distress—as sensible and serviceable a charity as any in existence. It was the Bishop who gave the

Merry Monarch's Prayer Book, &c., to Steane Church. Pepys gives us the picture of the prelate holding forth gravely and with fine delivery, a style which appealed so strongly to the diarist, who, with the preacher's nieces, sat listening in the organ loft of Whitehall Chapel. One of the last Hungerfords (of Cadnam Manor, Bremhill), an heiress, married one of the last Crewes, and from this union descend the representatives of the present Crewe barony.

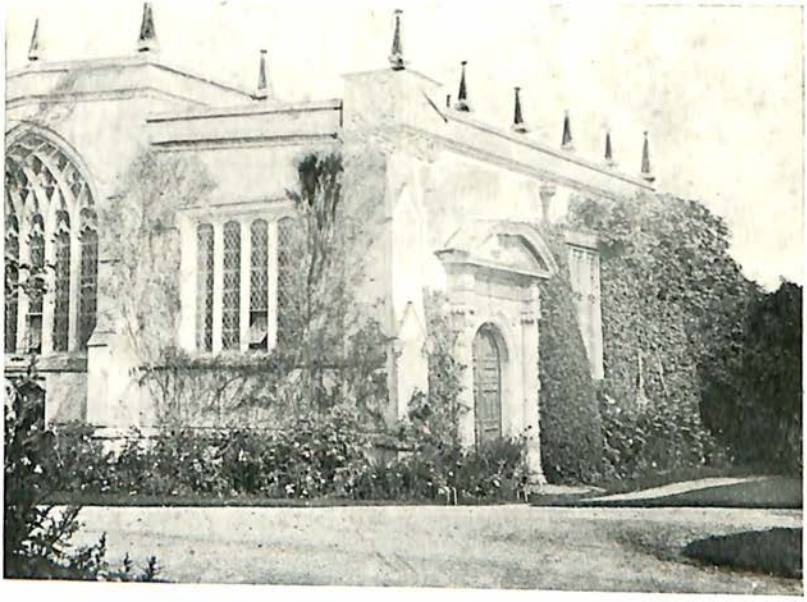
The motto of the new creation of 1806 showed independent spirit: "Sequor nec inferior." But that line died out also, and the barony again was revived in 1858.

Back through the broad avenue where once ran the Roman road, and along a quiet lane, we reach the Buckingham and Banbury road again, and the distance of about a mile will find us at the little village of Farthinghoe. Here close to the church and standing a little back from the road is an old house with the remains of a Tudor ivy-covered gateway in front. It is now a farm, but has evidences of being once of some importance. The windows were closely shuttered, and the length of the grass and the accumulation of weeds on either side of the stone-flagged path gave the place a somewhat eerie look. A few inquiries at a cottage produced the possessor of a key of the

"Abbey Lodge" (the name by which the house goes); but very little of its history was forthcoming. It had been empty, he said, for six years, and he looked as if he could have said something more as to the reason thereof had he shown any symptoms of being "drawn" upon the subject. But if the house had a ghostly look without, there was an undoubted creepy feeling about its pent-up rooms and passages. A house closed for so long, even a modern one, must necessarily be looked at askance, but a stranger alighting upon such a place can have no such biassed feelings, yet, curious to say, something in the dingy, empty rooms seemed to say, "This place is haunted!"

Nor were the old-fashioned rooms themselves particularly dark or gloomy; indeed, a coating of green paint upon a Tudor fireplace did its best to make things look homely. The rooms were panelled. A finely moulded wooden archway in an upper room showed how the apartments had been sub-divided and spoiled. While examining these details, there issued from somewhere close at hand a prolonged and awe-inspiring moan, which could be likened neither to the sound of wind, a creaking door, nor an asthmatic cow. Turning to our guide for an explanation of so unaccountable a noise, his marked silence again expressed a mute meaning. But something at

Abbey Lodge, Farthinghoe



Steane Church

length was forthcoming. Stories were told, he said, of treasure hidden in that room, though he had never had the good fortune to alight upon it. And he pointed out the particular floor-boards where the money was said to be concealed! The rest was left for the imagination to heighten the effect. Altogether it was somewhat of a relief to leave those mysterious low-ceilinged rooms behind and get into the welcome space of the clerestoried nave of the church.

Here were distinct evidences that some of the remains of the original Priory had been annexed, and the blood-curdling groan perhaps was bestowed in the way of eloquent protest. A Tudor doorway had been added to the chancel, and the sculptured arms and crest looked as if they had originally belonged to the Lodge. The hopeless complication presumably dated from the beginning of the nineteenth century. A tomb erected in 1801 quite ignores the fact that it blocks up a fine old doorway on the south of the chancel. The vestry viewed from the inside looks as if it had been added at the same time, but an external view contradicts this supposition, and a doorway placed at a curious angle adds to the mystery. The latter certainly looks out of place, and one may suppose it was transferred from that unfortunate and evasive Abbey. The organ has been planted

right through a fine window, and an awful twisted iron pulpit is obtrusively conspicuous. The stairway which led up to the Rood loft is intact, and that is about the only thing that has not been tampered with.

There are no memorials to the ancient family of Farthing, who are said to have come from here. For some loyal service they were entitled to use Royal arms. A daughter of Charles I.'s chaplain, Dr. Walter Raleigh, married one of these Farthings, and from them descended representatives who, early in the last century, lived in the parish of St. Vedasts, London. A few years ago died at Herne Bay an aged widow lady, a connection by marriage, in whose possession was a fine full-length portrait of her husband's grandmother, Jane Farthing, a beautiful woman of George III.'s reign. The picture was sold after the old lady's death for a hundred and fifty pounds. It appeared soon afterwards at a London auction room, and, being attributed to Hopner, was knocked down for eight thousand guineas.

As one nears Banbury, the town so much involved in the Civil War, traditions of encounters between Cavalier and Puritan crop up on all sides. In the churchyard of Middleton Cheney, to the west of Farthinghoe, were interred many of those who fell in a skirmish which took place there in

May, 1643. On the last day of June of the following year Charles himself marched through these two villages on his way to Gloucestershire, exchanging prisoners with Colonel Whalley at Adderbury, a few miles to the south-west. What occasion there was for him to hide himself in the Manor House of King's Sutton, close by, tradition, which asserts this fact, does not relate; however, it was not for long, for he was at Deddington on July 1st. Banbury in those days must have looked, as it was, a formidable town for an enemy to tackle, with its sturdy five Bars or Gates, such as one sees to-day in the city of York, though even then a "ride-a-cock-horse" expedition would have been futile, for the famous Cross of the familiar nursery rhyme which had braved and survived the Reformation had vanished nearly half a century before the Protector's soldiers could have had the satisfaction of knocking it over. And this recalls the grand old "Globe Room" of the "Reindeer" Inn, so closely linked with Charles I.'s sojourn at Banbury, which quite recently has been sold, and thereby, minus its surroundings, losing all its charm of association. It seems never to come home to the people who buy and sell such fixtures that without their original environment these ceilings and wainscotings, however elaborate they may be, descend to the level of ordinary artistic work-

manship in wood or plaster. The romance of the association is entirely wiped away. Who ever troubles his head about the events which have happened in the Sizergh Room at South Kensington Museum, for example, or the people who have basked in the warmth of the Lime Street fireplaces?

But Banbury and its well-known "lions" does not really come into our programme, for this way we should soon touch ground covered upon a former occasion; our way lies more southward, and the "Reindeer" is but a reflection *en passant.*

At Warkworth, to the south-west of Middleton Cheney, and separated from Banbury by the river Cherwell, we are nearing the border of Northants. The church is rich in old monuments and fifteenth-century carvings on the bench-ends. Of this period mostly are the monuments of the Chetwodes containing their brass effigies. This ancient family hails from the village of that name, near Buckingham, where the Manor holds the yearly privilege of enforcing a toll in stray cattle, the ceremony of which opens on a November morning by sound of horn, when gingerbread and beer are distributed among the boys assembled. Girls are not permitted to benefit by this ancient institution—an effront to the modern emancipation of their sex which should be duly reported to the proper

official quarters. The difficulty could be easily got over by merely reversing the order of things and providing the ladies with bread and ginger-beer.

Finer than the Chetwode tombs at Warkworth are the knightly effigies of the de Lyons, dating about a century earlier. The beautiful workmanship and elaborate detail of the altar tomb of Sir John de Lyons is worth particular study.

CHAPTER IV

NORTH OXON AND EAST GLOUCESTERSHIRE

CROSSING the border-line into Oxfordshire, close to which the Great Western line runs, the Oxford Canal travelling parallel is passed, and then the main road to Oxford is struck. This in a mile or so would bring us to Adderbury, but the village we must skip, as it has been described upon a former journey.

Deddington, further to the south (or "Dadintone," as it is called in the Domesday Survey), is placed at the intersection of the two highways running between Oxford and Banbury, and Buckingham and Chipping Norton, and we propose now to follow more or less the direction of the latter, as it is our object to travel into Gloucestershire.

There is something about Deddington Church suggestive of Ainsworth's romance *Old St. Paul's*,

the various stairways in the walls recalling the athletic exploits of the fanatic, Solomon Eagle, and the ghostly crypt beneath the south aisle reminding one of the fate of that lovable couple, Chowles and Judith. But Ainsworth is out of date and rarely read nowadays. If his creations are condemned for turning the young mind to highwaymen and outlaw worship, how about the tendency of the seductions of the modern picture palace? Ainsworth also was a stepping-stone to Scott, who now is also set aside. In instilling an early love of romance he also created an interest in antiquarian lore, in English history, and in the topography of the country: things which the modern novelist rarely troubles his head about. And at this moment of looking back the thought presents itself:—what institution have we now which in point of intellectual suggestion can anywhere near approach the excellent old Polytechnic with its entertaining and instructive lectures on the sciences, made palatable by pandering to the youthful love of the marvellous? With the decline of the more solid school of entertainment the cult of sport has steadily increased, which in a sporting nation is possibly as it should be, yet also the present mania for football and cricket seems to have a tendency to obliterate all other interests and ambitions.

With apologies for this brief digression, we will return to Deddington. In addition to the grim old "Great House" near the church, with its many ghostly-looking latticed windows (where Charles I. slept on the night of June 30th, 1644, upon his westward march from Banbury), the old Town Hall and one or two ancient inns do their best to keep up an old-fashioned air in an otherwise rather up-to-date-looking place. Saving the hamlet of Hempton to the west, no villages are encountered between the towns of Deddington and Chipping Norton. The hills to the right contain the Barfords, and further along to the left Nether Worton and Great Tew. These are both pretty villages, especially the latter, which is well worth a detour in that direction to see the accredited most beautiful village in Oxfordshire, and to recall the shade of the Cavalier Viscount Falkland, whose studious and secluded life was so harshly interrupted by the Civil War, and who ten years after his succession was brought back from the Newbury battlefield to be interred in an unknown grave, for only thirty years ago was a tablet set up to the memory of this fine Englishman, of whom such opposites as Clarendon and Whitelock alike are lavish in their praise. Not forty years after he had sacrificed his life for his Sovereign we find the latter's Royal successor

dining at Falkland's birthplace, Burford Priory, not with a Cary descendant, but, think of it, with the braggadocio squire, Sir John Lenthall, the son of the Long Parliament Speaker, who had removed into Oxfordshire from the worries at Chancery Lane. If there is no monumental effigy of the Cavalier at Great Tew, a bust of him may be seen upon his grandsire's gorgeous tomb in Burford Church, and those who wish to compare the likeness with contemporary portraits must go to Devonshire House, Langleat, or the Grove at Watford.

Of the mansion at Great Tew inherited from his mother's father, Sir Lawrence Tanfield, nothing remains. It was burnt down in 1790, and only the aged oaks and boundary walls can recall that terribly sad homecoming, of which the pathetic picture, "The Empty Saddle" (inspired at Burford), speaks so eloquently. Thus runs the entry in the register of Great Tew:—

> "The 23rd of September the
> Right Honble. Sr. Lucius Cary Knight
> Lord Viscount of Falkland and
> Lord of the Mannor of Great Tew
> was buried Here."

Three years later the grave was opened for his widow. The romantic marriage of Sir Lucius with Leticia Morison had been a purely love

affair, which had estranged father from son. Sir Henry Cary (at Berkhamstead and Aldenham) met with an accident at Theobalds Park, and died before a reconciliation was brought about.

From seventeenth-century associations the earlier tombs in Great Tew Church hark back four centuries to the Veres and Wilcotes in chain mail, the figure of Sir Robert de Vere being remarkable for so early a representation in stone of the winged shoulder-pieces, or ailerons, which became so prevalent in after years. The church, embowered in trees, is mainly of Perpendicular date, but parts of it are Norman, and some of the oak benches are the original ones.

Proceeding further along the main road from which we have branched, the approach to Heythrop is passed. It is a successor to the Queen Anne mansion erected by the Duke of Shrewsbury, son of the eleventh Earl and his beautiful but abandoned Countess of Charles II.'s Court. That monarch stood for godfather, but nobody did more than this noble *protégé* in bringing the Stuart line to a close, for he it was who greatly aided Dutch William as well as hastening in the Hanoverians at Queen Anne's death.

Chipping Norton, situated on the side of a hill, is rather a bare and cheerless-looking town, shadeless in the summer sun, and merciless in the winter

when the wind comes sweeping from the north-east. The gabled stone houses are provided with few trees to relieve their monotony, and the width of the road emphasises the general bareness. On ordinary days it looks the sleepiest of sleepy places, but aspects are vastly changed at least twelve times in the year, when the monthly market fairs are held. Upon these occasions there is ample animation. The jolliest-looking farmers for miles around, from the heart of Oxfordshire and from Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Buckinghamshire, and Berkshire, remote corners of which counties are all within a radius of a little over twenty miles, come rattling merrily into the town in their smart light dog-carts. Here in the assembled crowds are genuine John Bulls galore: types of the healthy, honest English farmer that could not be rivalled in the length and breadth of the land. So much for the human interest of the town when things wake up on the first Wednesday of each month. Chipping Norton Church (which stands aloof from the main street) with modern tower has many fine details. The tracery of its generously proportioned windows, the canopied niches and sedilia, the porch with groined roof and grotesque heads for bosses, are all distinctive features to be examined. But in other ways havoc has been played wholesale.

The monumental brasses have all been removed from their original places and replaced museum-fashion to do penance with other improvements.

The ancient lords of the town were the Crofts, the Rodneys, and then the Comptons, and before this trio, the de Veres and Fitz Alans. But descendants of them all have long since died out so far as Norton is concerned. A handsome tomb in alabaster remains of the lord of the manor in Henry VII.'s time—Richard Croft—but he and his wife Agnes appear to be the only representatives left.

To the north and north-west are Chastleton, Rollwright, and the Comptons, of which we have spoken upon previous journeys. Our direction, therefore, now lies more to the west towards Stow-on-the-Wold, on the eastern side of Gloucestershire. And now the hills begin to assert themselves in earnest, giving the country a decidedly wilder aspect. At Daylesford we cross the Oxfordshire border into a detached wedge of Worcestershire surrounded by Gloucestershire. Here died Warren Hastings, the famous descendant of the Cavalier John, whose confiscated estate he repurchased. But as everything now is very new, we will hurry on and begin the climb to Stow, not only on the Wold, but on the Roman Fossway.

Stow is a grey, stone-built, typically Gloucester-

shire little town, after the style of Chipping Norton, with nooks and corners thrown in, and a general, more picturesque outline of ancient buildings. The noble pinnacled tower of the church o'ertops these gables and dormers from nearly every point of view, shut in as it is on every side. Not far away, at a corner of the main road, stands "The Unicorn," a thoroughly old-world inn, with ostler of the old school who bestirs himself to make things comfortable. But who could expect a formal, callous, and chilly reception at so cosy-looking an hostelry?—and, after all, the sort of reception one has, though really of little consequence, usually leaves behind a good impression, and thus we do not hesitate to dub Stow-on-the-Wold as a success in every way. The market cross, well defended from motor or juvenile attacks by a formidable spiky railing, gives the square in which it stands rather a Continental look, which is emphasised by the style of architecture of the modern Town Hall. The gabled headstone with saintly carvings in the niches perhaps would have looked less a restoration minus the floriated cross upon its summit. The large size of this latter somehow seems to throw the lower proportions out of balance. The crosses at Down Ampney and Ampney Crucis, of which we shall speak presently, are very similar in design, but

have no such terminal, nor can we call to mind such another example in England.

A narrow entry or passage-way beneath an old house opposite the market cross, as well as some antiquated buildings with windows all aslant further along, are among the more sketchable "bits" of the town, not forgetting the Tudor Grammar School in the vicinity of the church. A big elm-tree in a corner of the green protects, so far as it is able, the decrepit stocks and whipping-post from the full brunt of northerly gales, but as Stow never gets a sufficient dose of water to cause it inconvenience, moist conditions are only temporary. The interior of the church has suffered considerably, and displays an abundance of modern workmanship. Marble memorials to the Chamberlaynes of Maugersbury House (to the east of the town, in which the family has been stationed since the reign of Elizabeth) are prominent. Also Chamberlayne-Chamberlaynes, one of whom was the donor of a Flemish painting in the chancel, so that you are not likely to forget so resounding a name. The interment in the chancel of Captain Keyt recalls a desperate engagement which took place on the northern side of the town on March 21st, 1645–6, in which the Royalists were defeated. The old Cavalier, Lord Astley, one of the first to join the King's standard, with

a large body of horse and foot, was forcing a march from Worcester towards Oxford with the object of joining Charles, but owing to dispatches being intercepted, his wearied troops were overtaken at Donnington, ten miles from Stow, which resulted in total defeat, Astley and Sir Charles Lucas being taken prisoners. The defeated General, seated upon a drum surrounded by his captors, calmly told them that they now had leisure for play, for they had completed their work. But he added the rider, "if you fall not out among yourselves"—which qualification proved true enough within very few years.

And now we descend some three hundred feet into the valley where water is plentiful, for there are brooks and streamlets flowing everywhere towards the Windrush river. Lower Slaughter, a little off the main road to the right, is a far prettier village than its name. It nestles around the banks of a clear, wide stream, across which here and there stretch little rustic bridges: a model village in every way excepting that, unlike most model villages, it retains its old appearance, and the cottages that have replaced older ones have been so carefully and tastefully designed and built that at a first glance it is difficult to define the old from the new. In the midst of all this rustic prettiness stands the Manor House at the entrance of the vil-

lage, with immense stone gateway piers mellowed by lichen and moss, and beyond, the old stables on one side and the mansion on the other, the former but little altered in character, the latter in the main part rebuilt in 1770, and since then added to. Continuing past the buildings, you find the daintiest of gardens, which when the dazzling scarlet mallows are in bloom look doubly gay and joyful after the varying sedative tones of green along the banks of the river. Above this broad stretch of colour rises the pedestal of a stone sundial, and beyond, forming the most befitting background, an ancient gabled dovecote with quaint dormer windows and stone-tiled roof, in whose ruggedness lies more than half its charm. At the base of this ancient structure is a miniature stone-lined Tudor door, and squeezing through its narrow opening you look up into the time-worn timbers of the roof. Never was space bestowed so lavishly for the comfort of these graceful dwellers —palatial is the only word to find at all appropriate.

The rooms in the Manor House have handsome Jacobean fireplaces and ceilings, one of the former bearing the date 1658, and another, more severely classic in design, suggestive of the overmantel of a Venetian palace. The ceiling of the latter room represents Biblical figures enclosed around by

wreaths, all in high relief. Among the old masters is an interesting portrait of "Bloody Mary." The Georgian Whitmores in their red military coats look almost alive enough to relate their histories. One of them served under General Wolfe at the taking of Louisburg. Another looks as if he might have had a leaning towards "the King over the water"—but that is merely judging by appearances. In Lely's languishing Lady Whitmore[1] at least, an engraving of which hanging here jogs one's memory, we can find a Stuart sympathiser; for it is possible if the Merry Monarch could have had his way she might have outrivalled even my Lady Castlemaine. But that imperious sultana was far too clever to give the little charmer even a chance, and so she did far better than she might have done by marrying Sir Thomas Whitmore, the second son of Sir Thomas Whitmore, Bart., of Apley Park, near Bridgenorth, which estate by lack of male issue to Sir William's elder brother (the baronetcy becoming extinct with his death in 1699) passed into the possession of Sir William's second cousin, William Whitmore, of Lower Slaughter, who thus became head of the ancient family. In the seventeenth century the first three

[1] *Viz.*, The Hampton Court portrait. A contemporary miniature of her, painted by Nathaniel Dixon in 1667, is in the Whitehead Collection.

Stuart monarchs bestowed honours on the Whitmores. Sir William of Apley was knighted in 1620. His brother, Sir George of Slaughter, and also Sir William's son, Sir Thomas (the father of the Court beauty's husband) suffered considerably for their loyalty to Charles I. Apley and Balmes House were seized by the Parliamentarians, and their owners thrown into prison. Balmes was the London residence of Sir George, who here upon two occasions had entertained the King. So altogether, with this Stuart leaning, the Jacobite-looking portrait may have more foundation than mere fancy. Before the seventeenth century the Whitmores lived in Shropshire, where for eight generations successively they were lords of the manor of Claverley.

A peep into the village Reading Room at Lower Slaughter reveals the fact that aspirants for the stage have ample scope for displaying their histrionic talent. Surely a village so small as Lower Slaughter never before possessed a stage fully equipped with drop-curtain and scenery? The surrounding villages must be greener with envy than their wonted verdure would warrant.

But all the time we've forgotten the church, whose tapering spire o'ertopping the masses of foliage invites inspection, although, rather sad to relate from an antiquarian point of view, it has

been rebuilt less than half a century ago. The reredos, however, is a thing of beauty that must delight the eye of everyone; for simplicity of style, for colour, and for artistic workmanship we question whether it has its equal.

The companion village of Upper Slaughter, also watered by a feeder of the Windrush River, though prettily situated in a sheltering valley, has nothing of the charm peculiar to the lower village, although the church is old and the Manor House of more architectural interest than the seat of the Whitmores. This latter is a picturesque Early Jacobean building of stone with ample gable-ends, central porch, and mullioned windows—a type that is often met with in the Cotswold district. However, when we saw it, the house was not looking at its best, for it was in the throes of restoration, and the usual disorder of planks, ladders, and wheelbarrows did not form the best of foregrounds. Exteriorly the church with embattled tower and a little ornamental sanctus belfry over the nave roof has not been much spoiled. The most interesting thing within is a fine Early English arch at the west end of the nave, sculptured with late Norman decoration.

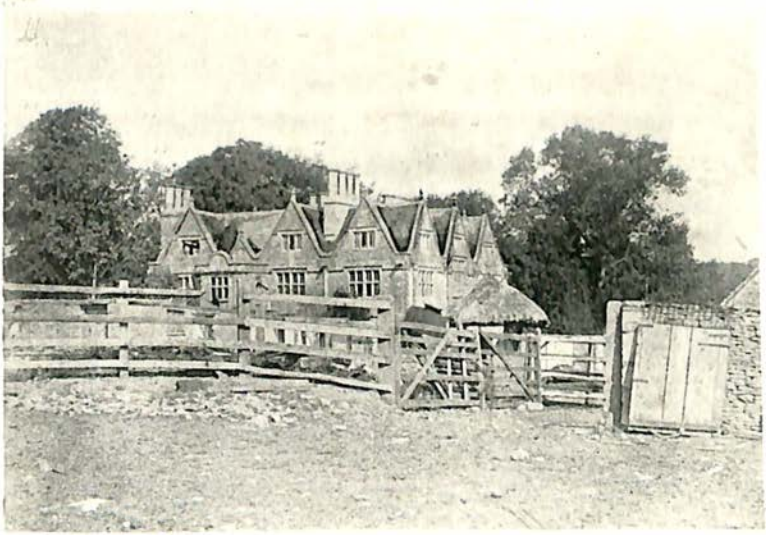
A story concerning such a west end arch as this in quite another part of the country is somehow irrelevantly recalled. But this particular arch had

become in rather a dilapidated condition, and sadly needed a little patching up in places. For this purpose a fund was raised, and, when practical, the Sabbath offertory went towards it. Upon one occasion, so as to make it more widely known, the rector issued a circular which was duly printed in the village, and the printer's "devil" must undoubtedly have been responsible for the startling announcement which on Sunday was stuck up in large type: "The collection to-day will be devoted to the arch fiend."

The brasses date a little earlier than the Manor House. In the chancel is a tablet to John Slaughter, of Over Slaughter, who died in 1583, and of Eleanor his wife, daughter of William Baghott, of Prestbury, who died four years later. Also of "Paris Slaughter, sonne and heire unto John Slaughter, Esquire," who died in 1597, aged fifty-five. The restorers of 1877 thought fit to turn the old font out into the churchyard, so since that dark age of vandalism has passed it may be reasonably hoped it will one day be reinstated into its rightful place.

Before turning southward, the lovely stretch of densely wooded country to the north-west, past Eyford Park and the Guitings, cannot be omitted. A well or little streamlet, over which was a bowery summer-house, on the former estate is famous as

Old House, Bourton



Manor House, Upper Slaughter

being the spot where Milton wrote part of *Paradise Lost*, and it is doubtful whether a more secluded sylvan spot could have been found for poetic musings.

Before Heythrop was built, Eyford was a residence of the before-mentioned first and last Duke of Shrewsbury, who, when free from the cares of statesmanship, loved nothing so much as to bury himself here. His phlegmatic guest, William III., never given to be particularly enthusiastic about anything, also found the quiet and seclusion much to his liking. His Grace of Shrewsbury was quite a connoisseur in scenery, which is apparent by his possession also of the Alton estate, which he permanently entailed for the noble house of Talbot.

In the vicinity of Guiting Power and its Grange there are scarcely any signs of habitation. The locality if anything is more "out of the world" than in Dutch William's day. The inhabitants —the few that are left—appear to have given up as a hopeless case the possibilities of things ever livening up, and so have dwindled into nothing beyond the requirements of the church and Manor House, which ancient institutions hold on to the last like the captain and mate of a sinking vessel. Such is the first impression in this lonely locality, for many of the ancient cottages and farms are

empty. Beyond the densely-wooded grounds of Guiting Grange (which building is not particularly old) is the little village green with its more or less deserted Tudor houses of stone—the church with bold Norman doorways and the fine old gabled Manor House. The further Guiting, distinguished by the prefix of Temple, lies to the north, and, if anything, is even more buried in trees and wrapped in seclusion. Here again is a Tudor gabled Manor House, of which Corpus Christi, Oxford, is the landlord, and this is reassuring so far as renovations are concerned. Yet, taken generally, Oxford City after all is a careless guardian of its ancient buildings, for was there not fairly recently an eloquent lament regarding its callous attitude, not so much towards its Colleges as the domestic architecture of its streets? On the top of the desecration of Magdalen Bridge came the demolition of the "Angel" hostelry to make room for new school buildings. The writer to the paper pointed out with withering sarcasm that the old "Mitre" Inn had to go "for the vile purpose of improving the access of the purveyors of greens to the city market!" In addition to this, Carfax and Queen Street not having sufficient breathing space for the manœuvre of market carts, Carfax Church and a slice of the Cornmarket had to come down, including the

Elizabethan "Crown Tavern," where, according to Aubrey, Shakespeare "did commonly lye" upon his journeys between Warwickshire and town. Then how about that delightfully quaint if not unique old Jacobean building "Nixon's Schools," which was wantonly destroyed to make way for new municipal buildings? But the antiquary Hearne lamented such losses two centuries ago, so what must Oxford have been in his time?

But we have unwittingly wandered from the wilds of Gloucestershire into the city of towers and learning. From Temple Guiting it is but a matter of a few miles to reach Wood and Church Stanway and Stanton, old-world places visited upon a former pilgrimage. In that direction to the north-west a walk across the lonely hills would bring us to a farmhouse called Lower Coscombe, and beyond this building, a mile or so further into the Cotswold wilds, stands Upper Coscombe Farm. At this latter isolated old house, according to a Cheltenham paper, there were strange and unaccountable happenings some twenty-two years ago. In parts the place was rather dilapidated after an empty period, and with a new tenancy in view workmen were sent over from Cheltenham to effect repairs. To them and to the people who removed the furniture, as well as to the occupants themselves, strange sights and sounds soon mani-

fested themselves. The centre of these eerie occurrences appears to have been the kitchen, a long and low-ceilinged room with cross-beams and whitewashed walls, with a copper in one corner, and over it a leaden casement of small square panes. This looked out upon a low wall dividing the garden from the farmyard, beside which an abutting portion of the house and an ivy-grown porch could be seen. In this room one of the painters had been engaged working overtime one evening, when he was suddenly startled by three taps at the window, and, looking up, was surprised to see the white face of a young woman looking in, or rather the upper portion only of the face. The first thought was that somebody had lost the way, but the strange fashion of the bonnet encasing the face was unaccountable. In a trice he had pulled on his coat and was outside by the low wall, but his mysterious visitor was nowhere to be seen. The curious occurrence resulted in watch being made the next night by the painter and two of his mates. But nothing happened. On the following night, however, while the three were at work, the taps at the window again were audible, and the white face was there again peering in. As before, the whole of the face was not visible, the mouth being hidden by a bow or the folds of lace trimming to the large white sun-bonnet en-

circling the face. However, sufficient could be seen to entitle the possessor to decided claims to beauty notwithstanding its pallor.

On this occasion there were other workmen in the house, and they were called so soon as the three witnesses to the ghostly visitor had recovered from their first alarm, and one of the new comers had the courage to lean over the copper and stare straight into the pleading eyes without. The window being but a few yards from the outside door, one of the party dashed out into the darkness, and, as nobody could be seen by the lamplight from within, stood with his face close to the window to show his companions that the lady had fled. "She's bolted!" he shouted, and almost simultaneously the others heard the three taps on the glass, and saw the woman's face *cheek by jowl with that of her investigator*, and there the face remained until the man had joined the others in the kitchen, a matter of full three minutes. The news spread so far as it could in this sparsely inhabited region, and then some sort of explanation for the supernatural visitations was forthcoming. Report had it that about eighty years before a servant girl had been made away with at that farm, and the perpetrator of the deed had never been brought to justice. The "White Lady" had been often seen, and one old woman

declared that upon one occasion an occupier of the house was on the point of death, and she happened to be passing into the yard when she distinctly saw the "White Lady" standing outside by the low garden wall looking in at the kitchen window.

Apropos of occurrences psychical and incomprehensible, the unpleasant experiences of a friend who had engaged apartments near a quiet town in Norfolk are worth recording, because the narrator is a total abstainer from such studies as well as stimulants in any shape or form. We quote his story verbatim that it may lose none of its grip :—

"By request, I send you the following account of a very unpleasant experience that befel me during my last holiday. After reading it you may 'write me down' as what you like—an ass, or mad; but what I here set down appears to be the truth even after the lapse of four months, so that the effect the circumstances produced upon me was evidently much stronger than I thought at the time. On arriving at —— I had the greatest difficulty in getting rooms, but at last succeeded in doing so in a newly-built house about a mile from the town, occupied by a young widow with three children and her sister. The rooms were good, and, in fact, the bedroom furniture quite sumptuous. The husband, who had been dead about a month, had been studying hard for an

examination in connection with the County Council, of which he was an official. His loss naturally was a great calamity, and the poor wife was in sore trouble.

"On retiring to bed I went to sleep at once, as usual, but was soon unaccountably awakened by a sense of some great horror—as of some ghastly *presence* with me in the room. However, I managed to calm myself by matter of fact reasoning that I was much too old to be affected by this species of nightmare. I therefore willed myself to sleep again, an easy matter, being very tired, but to be awakened almost immediately by the same sensation. The room appeared to be filled with some frightful living horror. Even when fully awake this idea persisted—a feeling as if some sinister force were striving to possess my mind! I then determined not to attempt to sleep again, so sat by the open window trying to concentrate my thoughts on other matters, and I still believe that had I relaxed my will power for a single moment something very serious would have happened to me mentally. When the welcome sunshine came, the feeling of dread to a great extent was dispelled. In the morning when I again met the two women, I, of course, refrained from any mention of the occurrence. They were friendly and talkative, and regaled me with a

much too full account of the husband's death. It appeared that he had died from an abscess on the brain brought on by over-study, which for three months had kept him in nameless agony, and his ultimate death was far too terrible for words to describe. Then came the sudden thought: Was the room I had occupied the one in which all this tragedy had taken place? I dared not ask! But before leaving a word was dropped which confirmed my suspicions. It is needless to say that the rooms which had been taken for a week were vacated at once, and I pitched my camp ten miles away. But it was many days before I could throw off the incubus.

"You will naturally inquire as to the nature of my supper. But I can assure you that indigestion played no part whatever in producing the fancies above set down, and knowing as you do the rigorous rule by which I live, I feel certain you will do me the justice of looking for some other cause."

CHAPTER V

EAST GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND NORTH WILTS

If instead of turning northward to Temple Guiting we had kept straight ahead by the luxuriant dense woods, we by and bye should have found ourselves at Sudeley Castle.

Of this historic building and its associations we have written upon a previous occasion,[1] so here we must terminate our westward course. But ere we turn, an unpretentious farm upon the Sudeley Estate known as the "Boiling Wells," must not pass unnoticed on account of a curious past association. It appears that a man who lived there in the reign of Charles II. somehow got hold of the information of a plot to assassinate his Majesty, for even the most popular of Kings was not altogether secure from the very time he ascended the throne, although he always affirmed that it would

[1] *Vide, Nooks and Corners of Old England.*

never be worth anybody's while to get rid of him so as to put his unpopular brother in his place. The threatened danger possibly was planned for the King's progress to Bath in the summer of 1663—the name of "Boiling Wells" indeed almost suggests the then fashionable warm baths at Bath which the Queen was ordered by her physicians to take, and for which purpose the Court removed there. However, whatever sinister plots may have been afoot, Charles and Catherine were safely back at Oxford within a month. It is possible also the information had some connection with the plots of the previous autumn, in which the King and the Dukes of York and Albemarle were to have been sacrificed. Be this as it may, the then proprietor of "Boiling Wells Farm," for his warning, is said to have received a Royal grant of house and land adjoining *for all time*. Nevertheless, the estate in question was sold in 1848 by a descendant of the original grantee.

Returning to the old Roman Fossway at the point where we left it, the villages to the east and south are well worth exploring. At Icomb Church and Manor House we make acquaintance with the ancient family of Blaket, one of whom fought at Agincourt. Their burial chapel and old residence date principally from the fifteenth century, though the latter is said to have been erected by the father

of Sir John, who fought for Henry V. In the decayed state into which this old place had fallen before the restorer scraped and cleaned it into its present flourishing condition, Icomb Place was one of the most picturesque examples of secular architecture in the county. The character of the house remains much the same: the buttressed porch with nail-studded oaken door defending the segmental pointed entrance arch, with beautiful fifteenth-century mullioned window above, and the huge chimney shafts on either side. But there is just that difference which constitutes the definition between the face of a beautiful old lady unaided by artifice, and of one rejuvenated, smoothed, and doctored out of the very lines and wrinkles which are charming in their own particular way. Doubtless the "linen" panelling remains in "the Refectory," and the ship in distemper still sails as merrily in an upper chamber, as when the place was tumbledown and ruinous such as we saw it many years ago.

The church has also undergone entire renovation, and of the two buildings has suffered the greater. The tomb of Sir John in the Blaket Chapel is richly sculptured with figures beneath the marble effigy of the knight. The alabaster effigy of his lady, the widow of Sir William Wylcote, of North Leigh (between Witney and

Woodstock), reclines in that church by the side of her first husband. The Cope family succeeded the Blakets in possession of the manor. They were a branch of the Copes of Hanwell Castle, near Banbury, who having been located there nearly three centuries purchased Bramshill in William III.'s reign, and still reside in that grand old Hampshire mansion. The William Cope whose monument is at Icomb married his kinsman's widow, the wife of the fifth Baronet, whose Oxfordshire castle through litigation had then passed into the hands of a distant relative.

The three Rissington villages are situated to the south of Icomb. The nearest, Wick Rissington, is nothing out of the common, but Little and Great Rissington further south are both picturesquely attractive, the former in particular, which stands high, commanding fine views across the Gloucestershire wolds and over the verdant valley watered by the Windrush river.

As you climb the winding road, old grey-stone houses present themselves on either side, their rows of pointed gables with hip-knobbed summits forming admirable subjects for the sketch-book. One cottage with projecting porch and open stone balustrade showed ominous signs in front of workmen's preliminary preparations: the disorderly array which always seems so con-

spicuous and obtrusive long before the workmen start seriously upon their business. The moss-grown tiling, the harmonies of brilliant green and rich brown-purple peculiar to the West of England stone country, maybe, was about to terminate its lease of life—a lamentable thing. Yet, after all, the comfort of the residents of these old places is, to them at least, of more importance than any artistic effect.

Charming as Bourton-on-the-Water looks from the higher ground, one must walk along the main street, following the course of the clear and sparkling river to see it at its best. There is plenty of animation here. Regiments of ducks and geese parade with military precision hither and thither, the long files following-my-leader into the water whensoever a refreshing dip takes the captain's fancy. In these family circles there is no twentieth-century independency: the mother, sons, and daughters are still contented to do as the head of the household directs.

The pretty little gracefully arched bridges which span the river at intervals are like a Venice in miniature—that is to say, barring the odours, which are entirely unknown to this cleanest of clean-looking villages. In place of Renaissance palaces lining the Grand Canal, we have here a modest watermill, with soothing churning sound

of paddle-wheel and the fresh scent of flour—or houses with old roofs tiled with weather-worn flags—or a porch surmounted by box-shaped sundial—manorial knobbed entrance gateways, and such like and so forth.

And, wonder of wonders for a village in these democratic days, rosy-cheeked children who actually "bob" to strangers! Such unwonted civility in the rising generation of 1912-3 may sound incredible, yet such is the case, astounding as it may appear, thanks to the pervading politeness born of the respect shown to the big-wigs of the neighbourhood. And, after all, dependants cannot afford to be defiant in all districts alike. When donations of coal and blankets cease, the labourer who has been taught to believe himself much better and more important than his master begins to consider whether the independent policy is one that pays.

Of the Manor House and the secret room discovered we have written elsewhere.[1] "New Inn" has upon its sundial in front the date 1718, but the old beams and the Tudor fireplace are not even as new as that by a century or so. The domed church tower is the one eyesore of Bourton. Georgian classic style looks sadly out of place in combination with the genuine Gothic, and Gothic

[1] *Vide, Secret Chambers and Hiding Places.*

at its best, that is to be found in a window of the north aisle. This lack of harmony upon the occasion of our visit was not improved by the prolonged agonies issuing from the organ chamber. Two ladies of tender years were struggling with the instrument, one with the keys and the other with the bellows, and the alternately halting and drawn-out result was not exactly soothing. Nevertheless, report says very exceptional musical talent is to be found in this very village. However, we must confess the budding organist hastened our departure.

The road from Bourton-on-the-Water to Bibury, by way of Northleach, lies over the eastern range of the Cotswolds, a series of stiff hills which in places present a wild and bold effect of light and shade—alluring eminences which stimulate the imagination with strange expectancy of the hidden stretch of country beyond. The hill-top has the poetic reputation of living in dreamland, and that is why no doubt there is ever a longing to reach the highest altitude, only to be disappointed when we get there and find other and more alluring eminences still further away. With a long stretch of road it is just the same: a hastening and craving to get beyond the range of vision to which we are limited at the moment.

So as to avoid the worst of the ups and downs

(for one must also look at hills in a practical way when motoring with a car of limited climbing power), we were advised to make a detour to the left by way of Sherborne, where we get the very reverse, for a road as level as a die stretches on either side of a secluded mansion and deer park, which here comes as a surprise in this lonely country.

Viewed from the distance of the entrance gates, this Inigo Jones "Hunting Box," know as Sherborne Lodge, looks of rather quaint design, something between the styles of Wootton Lodge in Staffordshire by the same architect, and (minus the portico) the Banqueting Hall of Whitehall Palace, with which latter it was likened by tourists in the seventeenth century. The great cluster of chimneys in the middle of the roof and the balustraded parapet are characteristic features of the building.

The pretty village of Aldsworth lies midway between Sherborne House and Bibury, but time and daylight would not permit of any loitering here, and only a hurried glance could be obtained of the little spired church with its holy-water stoup and chastely sculptured canopied niches. Just beyond the village the river Leach is crossed, which from its source, the Seven Springs, a few miles to the north-west, runs a south-westerly way

to Lechlade, where it joins the Isis or Thames. A little over a couple of miles further along, and the road winds gradually downward. Away to the left the ancient church and Court and some adjacent stone cottages form a charming group, which we will return to 'anon. Continuing the descent we by and bye come upon the level road running parallel with the river, and here one is bound to halt and "enthuse" awhile over the beauty of the scene.

On the further side of the rapidly running water, as clear as crystal, a delightful row of old stone-gabled cottages stands just at the proper angle so as to show to best advantage, the many pointed gables of this block foreshortened into the most picturesque outline, the dark background of the rising ground and hanging woods beyond throwing it into strong relief. Following the direction of the low wide-topped river wall, a snug-looking hostelry comes in view, and opposite it a bridge spanning the water, with pretty bits of garden on either side, and even a direction-post made to look pleasing by the aid of creepers. If the road be continued past this inn, another delightful view of Bibury is obtained from the hills to the north-west by Ablington, and here also is a fine old Manor House with Elizabethan pointed gables and projecting porch. But if

instead of going this way the bridge opposite "The Swan" is crossed, there are picturesque old buildings to attract the eye and make the climb less tedious. A time-worn water-mill on the right first fascinates with its swirling rush of foaming water, and, climbing higher, steep banks present themselves, with the roofs and gables of ancient cottages peering down over one another's shoulders. On the left-hand side is a larger, statelier house, with entrance gate of some distinction, and the creepers which cluster around the mullioned windows and mantle the pointed gables wrap the grey stone masonry in snug and sheltering embrace. It is called the Manor House of Arlington, although this side of Bibury is part and parcel of the rest. A second glance at this cosy-looking old house will reveal the welcome announcement upon a board high up on the wall that the traveller may find accommodation within, and, seeing that, who would hesitate for a moment? for such a pretty spot to sojourn in is rarely met with: steep rising ground on three sides and the downward road towards the river. We at least were very loath to leave such comfortable quarters.

Retracing our steps along the bank of the Coln river and ascending the hill a little way, we soon find ourselves facing the church, and attached to the wall of a cottage opposite is a notice-board

intimating where the key may be obtained. If other villages would but follow this admirable example, how much time would be saved! The guardian of the key lives close by in a picturesque cottage, whose garden, resplendent with every shade of orange-yellow and crimson begonias, afforded a welcome feast of colour where nearly all else is grey or green. An ancient dovecote, a giant cedar-tree, an old farm-shed with round stone pillars propping up the roof, and many another sketchable thing is close at hand for those who seek them. The churchyard, too, is very charming and garden-like, but many of the tombstones look far more odd than beautiful, for in shape they vividly if irreverently call to mind that familiar pattern of sponge-cake which is turned out of a ribbed mould. The best thing about the church is a Norman doorway of bold design—or rather there are two doorways of this period. The interior of the church is disappointing. The Early Tudor roof, however, is good, and there are several piscinæ, but the monuments of the Sackvilles, one of whom (Sir Thomas) built the mansion near by, and their successors, the Creswells, are conspicuous by their absence. The unadorned square font is as unlovely as it can be, resembling more than anything else an iron safe upon legs.

On one side of the churchyard, gay with roses, may be seen a wing of Bibury Court, and the number of gables, chimneys, and dormers visible in this corner makes one long to see the rest of it. But the mansion is so shut in, that to get any correct idea of its proportions or extent one has to go up into the encircling hills before a glimpse of the whole can be obtained. The higher part of the Quennington road to the south-east looks down upon this unspoiled Early Jacobean house, so peacefully embosomed amidst ancestral trees, with the silver bend of the river in front, and the old church with tall embattled tower by its side—a bird's-eye view such as is to be obtained in the wilds of rural England, and nowhere else in the two hemispheres.

The Manor House of Coln Saint Aldwyns, which is passed on the way to Quennington, though coeval with Bibury Court, has been terribly tampered with; indeed, its ancient appearance has been nearly obliterated by modern additions. There is nothing remarkable in the village, but one old stone cottage with finials upon its sharp gable ends is well worth passing notice. Hatherop Castle, a little to the east, is a Victorian fortress built upon the site of a mansion erected in the reign of Henry VII. This place recalls memories of the young Jacobite Earl of Derwent-

water, the grandson of Charles II. and Moll Davis, the actress; the victim of the 1715 Insurrection, for here at Hatherop he courted the daughter of the baronet lord of the Manor, Sir John Webb, the youthful and devoted wife who, in the King's Bedroom at Kensington Palace, pleaded so piteously and hopelessly for her husband's life.

Quennington Church, of course, is famous for its magnificent enriched Norman doorways, with quaint Scriptural sculptures of Our Lord vanquishing the devil and crowning the virgin. But excepting these north and south doorways, the rest of the building has a very modern appearance. The walls of the nave are hung with miscellaneous bits of sculpture like a museum, only showing the havoc that has been wrought within. The gateway of the old Priory of the Knights of St. John faces the road near the church, and has over its wide entrance archway a canopied niche of the Decorated period. The Priory afterwards became the seat of the Norman family of de Laci.

Quennington lies in a hollow, and now crossing the river by the old mill, Fairford is reached in less than a couple of miles. This little market town, however, calls for no description here. It is far too world-renowned, and details about its

unique church windows would be entirely superfluous. The successor of the delightful old gentleman who used to point out the several wonders of the ancient painted glass must reap a good harvest in the summer months, for visitors come from far and wide, and, in addition to these sightseers, the apostles of Izaac Walton are very fond of Fairford—and little wonder, for the river Coln down by the old gabled water-mill is the most peaceful and lovable of spots.

In the direction of Cirencester (which is nine miles away, due west of Fairford) are the Ampney villages—St. Mary, St. Peter, and Crucis. A fourth—Down Ampney—lies further to the south on the border of Wiltshire, equi-distant both from Fairford and Cirencester. Taking these villages in backward order, Down Ampney may be described as long and straggling. In the centre of the green, at the further end, stands a fine wayside cross, and in another direction the church and manor stand quite aloof by themselves. The cross is massive and lofty, the headstone being canopied, gable-fashion, like that at Stow-on-the-Wold, excepting that the figures beneath are in lower relief, and the floriated cross is small and more like a finial. The restoration of the cross is perhaps responsible for the rather clumsy appearance of the shaft.

The church and contiguous Manor House are approached by avenues of oak and elm. The churchyard is in the trimmest of order, but its smooth gravel paths show painful evidences of vandalism, for all along the edgings are bits of monumental sculptuary which some renovation has scattered broadcast. Such melancholy fragments, whether thus scattered or hung up, as at Quennington, always give one the idea that the vandal who did the breaking up, at the last moment when the bits were being carted off, felt some feeling of mild compunction, a qualm of conscience, as if at the eleventh hour the wreckage was suffered to remain as a remorseful and penitential reminder of his thoughtless act. Some of these bits of stone masonry have been constructed into a seat, upon which is carved: "There the weary be at rest," referring perhaps to the vandal's decease, or may be to a Hungerford or de Villiers interred within the church. But if some of the sculpturing has been mangled, there is still some beautiful work of the late Decorated period in the south transept. A sepulchre arch of quatrefoils and crocketed pinnacles is a choice example of its kind, and a niche within the porch is of the same period. An elaborate Jacobean screen divides off the Hungerford chapel of the north aisle, wherein is a hand-

some monument with the kneeling effigies, clad in armour, of Sir Anthony and Sir John Hungerford, with attendant angels, one of whom presents the crown of glory. The arms of this famous family, a wheatsheaf with three sickles interlocked, to be found on so many of their tombs and dwellings, are here in evidence. The monument was erected in the time of Charles I. for the former knight, who is described as "now living." He died seven years before the Restoration, and his father in 1637. On a ledge above rests a vizored helmet retaining the original gilding.

Of the Hungerfords we shall speak presently; meanwhile another monument in the south aisle, of Sir Nicholas de Villiers and his lady, attracts attention. Here we have much earlier effigies of a cross-legged Crusader (with shield ornamented by scollop shells) and his wife wearing the cumbersome head-dress and chin-wrapper then fashionable—snug, perhaps, in the winter, but somewhat suffocating in the dog-days. Nevertheless, there is always dignity about mediæval female dress. Though they may be odious, comparisons have a way of arising unbidden. In criticising the costume of Lady de Villiers, the fancy flies to the terribly short and tight-fitting skirts which are so much in favour with the fair sex to-day. Suppose

for a moment the effigy of a figure so encased handed down for coming centuries to criticise!

These de Villiers were ancestors of the pampered Duke of the time of James and Charles, and in their family Down Ampney Manor continued until the reign of Edward III.

The canopied pulpit and sounding-board, the chancel screen and the Rood-loft, with staircase leading up to it, are all of modern woodwork, but, it must be admitted, full of delicate and beautiful workmanship. Over the loft is the Rood, with figures of the Marys on either side as of old. The squint with moulded arch is of unusual shape and design. The font and pillared piscina and an oak chest dated 1630 are also interesting.

The present baronial Manor House dates from the reign of Henry VII., and though altered in parts, is a striking specimen of that period, having towered gate-house, battlements, domed turrets, and other picturesque details.

The great house of Hungerford figured not a little in Plantagenet, Tudor, and Stuart times. The main stem of this wide-spreading tree was planted at the now ruinous Castle of Farley (or Farleigh[1]), in Somersetshire, but they flourished at Heytesbury, Bremhill, Colne, and other parts of Wiltshire, as well as here in Gloucestershire.

[1] *Vide, Nooks and Corners of Old England.*

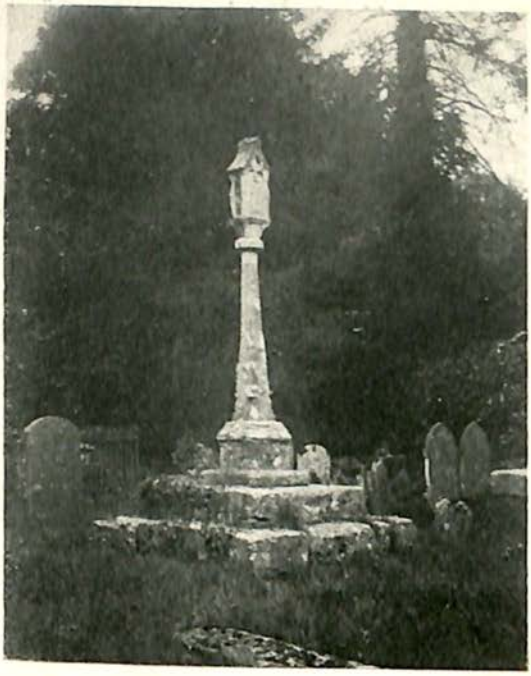
Belonging to this branch was the first Speaker of the House of Commons, and a later representative was Walter, Lord Hungerford, who on his tomb is described as having been serviceable to his King, viz., Henry VIII., who rewarded him in his own peculiar fashion by chopping off his head. Anyhow, he got his deserts, for if he was loyal he was far from lovable, having a propensity for imprisoning and starving his wives. The last male representative was Sir Thomas, whose daughter and heiress Bridget married Edmund Dunch (the fourth of that name), an old-established Berkshire and Wiltshire family. The Dunchs likewise became extinct in the eighteenth century upon the death of one Edmund, who, falling under the dominion of his wife (the daughter of James II.'s discarded mistress, Arabella Churchill), took to gambling and played away most of his estate, like the last male Hungerford, who at one sweep had to dispose of no fewer than twenty-eight manors. One of the last female representatives of the Hungerfords died also in the eighteenth century at Chippenham, where, by the way, is an interesting mortuary chapel bearing their name.

At Latton-cum-Eisey, to the south-west, the headless stump of a roadside cross shaded by a little clump of trees stands at the intersection of

the roads. An effort with the camera at this corner recalls a trifling incident of human interest, when two tiny Lattonites stood in the foreground fairly rigid until a passing cyclist caught their notice. Then one of them casually observed: "That's the man what give us all our babies"—gratuitous information at first a trifle startling, until one learned that the wheelman was the local doctor upon his rounds. There is little to speak of at St. Mary and St. Peter Ampney, but the fourth of this series, Ampney Crucis, is a charming retired little place, where, as at Down Ampney, the church and Manor House withdraw themselves into the select seclusion of their own society. The group amidst the trees, of church with embattled tower and sanctus bell turret, the gables of the manorial residence beyond, and "the weeping cross" which adorns the churchyard, bathed in the warm evening sunshine, afforded again one of those peaceful, essentially English pictures that the Yankee would give untold gold to possess. Of all this species of Gloucestershire cross—and there are many—this one is the finest. It is said to date from the end of the fourteenth century. The general style is similar to the one on Down Ampney village green, but the shaft of this at Ampney Crucis rises octagonally and tapers more towards the top; and the dog-kennel gable or roof

of the head is slightly curved in shape (adding so much to the grace of line), and the four niches are flanked by carved buttresses. But as we have said, the soft rays of the setting sun added that golden warmth which beautifies the most commonplace things. Still, Nature's colouring of the cross, apart from the sunshine—the tintings of orange lichen and the rich green of the moss, with the darker masses of foliage behind—went far to perfect the picture. Of course, the top of this graceful structure was knocked off during the fashion for iconoclasm, and for centuries the shaft stood meaningless, and not until a comparatively recent restoration was the top piece, or tabernacle, discovered amongst the litter that filled up the stairway leading up to the Rood-loft.

Upon entering the church the first thing naturally noticed is the brave old oaken door swinging upon enormous hinges. It has stood the wear and tear of no fewer than six centuries. In the north transept stands a large canopied tomb of a knight and lady of the Lloyd family, who held the manor in the sixteenth century. The seven kneeling daughters all wear the large, ungainly head-dress of the time (yet vastly more becoming than the pudding-basin and coal-heaver adornments of our day). Five sons are also kneeling, their heads gravitating in size, out of all



Cross, Ampney Crucis

Old House, Marston Meysey

proportion to their years. Above the tomb hangs a crested helmet and a sword.

After the Lloyds, the Pleydells held the manor and built the existing Manor House, and to their memory are several monumental tablets. An odd-looking piscina, like a sundial, stands in a corner of the chancel. The massive oaken screen has been poked away at the western end of the church beneath the belfry, but the original stone pulpit remains intact. A font of the same date (fifteenth century) succeeded a Norman one, which in its turn had to humble itself before the questionable taste of the Victorian era. The former font long since had been relegated to secular service, for the village well; therefore, instead of removing it from that exalted position, a brand new copy was made of it and perched upon the top of the Norman font. In later years of enlightenment the struggle for supremacy was renewed, and as fashions change from one extreme to the other, so did antiquarian taste clamour for further inversion; eventually, therefore, the Norman exponent was planted triumphant upon the Victorian copy. Still further complications may ensue, for the fifteenth-century original has at last been rescued from its menial service, and now stands beside the pseudo-Norman-Victorian combination, as much as to say: "The time will come when I shall act as

pedestal while my understudy may take a well-earned rest."

In the vestry are the old discarded oaken altar and a Jacobean table, one beneath the other for lack of space. High up on the wall is a very remarkable fresco representing the martyrdom of St. Erasmus, who, still wearing his mitre, is stretched upon a kind of rack, and torturers in the long-pointed shoes of the early Edwards are winding something out of his body by means of a pulley. A mediæval king and queen in state, attended by sword-bearer and another official, watch the proceedings with cold-blooded and callous indifference.

The grand old town of Cirencester, two and a half miles from Ampney Crucis, is too big a subject to be treated among casual notes such as these; but collectively a few words may be said of its general ancient appearance, its irregular outlines of houses, and the spacious width of the principal street. To call Cirencester's superb church anything else than a cathedral seems to be a slight upon so fine a structure, and as for its beautiful Henry VII. porch, or gatehouse, to say that it is unequalled in England is not to over-estimate its value; and yet, let it be whispered, the upper part of it is a restoration made a few years anterior to Victoria's accession. The grotesque gargoyles so

lavishly distributed around the church recall the lesser monsters of Notre Dame.

The somewhat grim-looking entrance gate to Lord Bathurst's seat, so near at hand, conceals the house from view, and one of the first things that strikes the uninitiated is that in such very extensive grounds the builder did not lay his foundation stone further afield, for with a five-mile avenue and woods innumerable there is ample scope for more seclusion. And then it appears that the house had already been built when the first Bathurst, Sir Benjamin, came upon the scene, and the park lands were an afterthought, and the work of half a century or more of the first Lord Bathurst, Sir Benjamin's son and successor. Sir Benjamin bought the estate from the Lord Treasurer, Henry Earl of Danby (afterwards Duke of Leeds). Prior to this the knight had lived at the Manor House of Paulersbury, near Grafton Regis, Northamptonshire, previously mentioned, in which church he and his dame were buried. Lady Bathurst, the daughter of the Royalist, Sir Allen Apsley, was throughout life upon intimate terms of friendship with the Princesses Mary and Anne. At the age of fourteen the latter wrote from Brussels in 1679, whither the Duke of York had removed with his family at the time of Shaftesbury's anti-Catholic

pressure. The letter is of especial interest, for not only is it the only youthful epistle extant by the Princess Anne, but it refers to her father's secret trip to England at the sick King's request, when James, disguised in a black periwig, arrived to sleep at the house of Sir Allen Apsley in St. James's Square:—"I find you weare mightely surprised to see the Duke," she writes; "indeed, we weare all mightely surprisde at it heare at first" [meaning the King's secretly sending for his brother], "and did not know what to think, but now I hope in God it will be for the best, and that I shall be so happy to bring the Duchess over with me, but I know not whethere I have any ground for these hopes. I hope I have, for I have a good heart, thank God, or els it would have bin down long ago." The rest of the letter is on more trivial matters, but nevertheless interesting:—"I was to see a ball at the Court in cognito, which I likede very well; it was in very good order, and some danc'd well enought; indeed, there was Prince Vodenunt that danc'd extreamly well, as well if not better than eithere the Duke of Monmouth or Sir E. Villiers, which I think is very extraordinary." She was struck by the town, which, if not so clean as Holland, she thought less dirty than London:—"They onely have od smells."

The first Earl Bathurst (son of Sir Benjamin) practically rebuilt the mansion, and made "the Elysian groves" referred to by Pope. By a pretty little summer-house, quite Inigo Jonesian in design, the several great drives converge. It is called "Pope's Seat," and if the poet, who had quite a monopoly of the place, was its designer as well as of the ivy-grown castellated sham in the wood (which even in those days took in the wily antiquary) attributed to him, it proves his architectural taste for the sort of Gothic which Horace Walpole might have studied with advantage.

Pope's noble patron and friend, with arms always open to the literary lights of his day, must have been a model Tory peer of the Georgian era. Few houses could boast of more witty, convivial meetings than those which took place at Cirencester House, or Oakley Grove as it is sometimes called. Swift, Prior, Congreve, Gay, Addison, Sterne were frequent guests, as well as Pope and Bolingbroke, and these brilliant people were kept well up to the mark for Buckingham, Rochester, and pretty Nelly and other associates of the Merry Monarch looked down from the walls ready to draw comparisons.

Among these Stuart portraits is one by Wissing of the Princess of Orange, afterwards Queen Mary. In the first year of his brief reign

James II. sent the Court painter over to The Hague to execute his daughter's portrait. Like his rival Kneller, Wissing was rather prone to flattery, and to give his lady models fascinating colour to their cheeks he used to dance them round the room. The portrait in question, of which there are several replicas (one of which is in the National Portrait Gallery), is decidedly a pleasing one, and evidently met with the sitter's approval, for she afterwards wrote to her friend, Lady Bathurst:—

"I own your complaint to be just, my dear Aurelia, and my long silence to be without excuse, and am resolved to make amends for the time to come. As for my picture, Mr. Wissing is now in England, so I can't give you an original, but if you will have a copie he may make you one whenever you please, do but give him order, and I shall take care to pay him when he sends me the picture I expect from him."

The original, which used to hang with Kneller's full-length "beauties" in William the Third's Presence Chamber at Hampton Court, is now in one of the other Royal Palaces. In James II.'s time it used to hang in his private cabinet at Whitehall. Here upon one occasion the poet Waller recognised in the portrait a certain likeness, he said, to "the greatest woman the world ever saw." James inquired who that might

be, and on being told Queen Elizabeth was meant, coldly observed, "She had great 'Ministers." "And when did your Majesty ever know a fool choose wise ones?" retorted the aged ex-Parliamentary Commissioner.

When the late Earl Bathurst, the sixth in succession from the patron of the muses, was dying at Cirencester House, a local *fête* and holiday was in progress, and as a striking instance of his forethought and consideration for others he expressed the wish that when the end came no intimation should be given outside to spoil the merry-making in the park.

Of Charles II.'s brief sojourn at Cirencester in 1651 we have written fully elsewhere, but may add here that three years after his Restoration, when upon the occasion of the progress of the King and Queen to Bath, the little "Sun Inn" in the main street for a second time was honoured by a visit, and it must have afforded Charles particular pleasure to see again the room in which, as serving-man to Mr. Lassels, he occupied a modest "truckle-bed."

CHAPTER VI

FROM WILTSHIRE INTO NORTHERN BERKS

So as not to clash with former journeys, our way now lies southward into northern Wiltshire. In less than a mile from Cirencester we reach the village, or rather the church, of Siddington St. Peter, whose spire stands out above a group of farm buildings a meadow's distance from the road. Nearer at hand a shed constructed out of a sort of gypsy van still announces in large letters "Gigantic World's Show," which consists apparently of a rickety old cart and a baby hunting hound here put out to nurse. A closer view of the "Church Farm" buildings prove them to be of some antiquity, and the group they form with the adjacent church is sketchable from several points of view.

Within the south porch of the latter we find a good Norman door, with figures carved upon the

tympanum, something after the style of those at Quennington. At the top of the arch is a demoniacal mask with horns, and one of the animated beak-heads surrounding the doorway is provided with slender arms, and the hands clutch hold of the two neighbouring probosces in very odd and facetious fashion. A beak-head on the opposite side is also provided with hands, which rest upon the moulding.

Again of Norman character is the chancel arch, but the ornamental flourish at the return of the hood-mould tends towards the Decorated era. The early font in the middle of the nave is as unbeautiful as the one at Bibury, but this more resembles a rolled-up carpet of diamond-pattern design. The roof of the north aisle is supported by brackets of angels holding shields, and on this side is the Langley chapel, built in the reign of Edward IV., where are altar tombs and canopied niches for saintly figures.

If we follow the southward course of the river Churn, a couple of miles will bring us to South Cerney, another pretty rambling village situated close upon the Wiltshire border. At one end of the village a rather ill-used cross looks down the two chief roads. The church, though modernised fifty years ago, is an interesting study of the stages of transition from Late Norman to Late

Gothic, and the ancient sculptors here have let their fancy run free in their weird conceptions of man and beast. Roadside crosses also remain at the villages of Ashton and Somerford Keynes, which lie towards the south-west. Ashton Keynes, indeed, is lavishly provided, for here there are no fewer than four crosses, but all of them decapitated.

Continuing our southern course to Wootton Bassett, no more villages intervene between this town and Ashton Keynes; but midway, in a picturesquely wooded spot, once part of the forest of Braydon, is a place called "Red Street," named from the fact that a skirmish took place there between the Royalist and Parliamentary forces in 1643. Until the early part of that year Cirencester had sided with Cromwell, but some time before Charles besieged Gloucester, Prince Rupert attacked and got possession of the former town. Fortune, however, was again reversed when Essex, in mid-September, sprang a surprise upon the Royalist forces, relieving his own famished army with the ample stock of the enemy's provisions he discovered in the town.

The old-fashioned town of Wootton Bassett, so favoured in past centuries by Royal privileges, was sadly slighted in the last century; for first of all it suffered the indignity of being deprived of

its two representatives in Parliament, and then fifty years later its full equipment of Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses was wiped away. No wonder that the intelligent and courteous old official who has charge of the curiosities in the ancient Town Hall compares these days of affluence with modern degenerate times. To think of it: a town that can boast of honours received from the monarchs, Henry VI., Elizabeth, and Charles II., should come down with so rapid a run under William IV. and Victoria! The Reform and the Municipal Corporations Acts have completely crippled it, and now quite recently one of its beloved trustees, Lady Meux, has died. Her ladyship's portrait, however, still presides in that queer old building where the Ducking-stool, provided with a roof for the remainder of its days, like a pensioner, meditates upon the past times of activity when short work would have been made of hysterical twentieth-century "wild women." The last occurrence when it was put into use was in 1808, when a certain Peggy Watkins (or Lawrence) received a sousing in a pond situated near the High Street, but long since dried up. Peggy's offence was the usual one for such a punishment, scolding; and she is to be found in a very animated election coloured print of the latter part of

George III.'s time, which hangs up near the stool. The assembly here represented is a strange and miscellaneous one. The two members in a carriage and four bring up the rear of a be-flagged procession, followed in a closed vehicle by their respective wives. A band and some horsemen lead the way through a rather disorderly mob elevated by high spirits and other liquid refreshments. The ducking pond also figures in the scene, and the pillared Town Hall, not blocked in as now by a modern hotel, but open to an unobstructed view of the proceedings. If Lord Clarendon is not among the rabble, his steward, William Jeffreys, is there in fancy costume, and if you have any doubt upon this point the worthy custodian has ample and convincing proof, for the said William Jeffreys was his wife's grandfather, and family papers exist which refer to these and other notable events.

But to return to the Ducking-stool. The oaken armchair, with the date carved upon it of the first year of James II.'s reign, is all that remains, excepting a small portion of one of the wheels. These wheels supported the framework and shafts which lowered the chair into the water, and were of the cart-wheel type, and the chair faced the operators who manipulated it by letting out rope attached to the end of the shafts. Some

Ducking Chair, Wootton Bassett

Cross, Down Ampney

years ago the whole apparatus was lent (or "loaned," to use the modern term) to a museum in another part of Wiltshire, and far from being treated with proper respect and care, an old woman in charge of it took the liberty of trundling people about in practical demonstration, until it fell to pieces. Whether this vandalism was prompted by spite or a fellow-feeling for former sufferers, or merely as a means of exhilarating the possibilities of an extra "tip," cannot be said, but when, after protracted delays, the instrument returned to Wootton Bassett, what was left of the framework or carriage portion was an utter wreck, from which state it never recovered, and so the old chair is all that is to be seen. At a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries a few years ago, in the Dean's House, Westminster—where the famous "Ragged Regiment" of the Abbey Wax-works were open to view and discussion—an ancient document which had been borrowed from the Abbey a century or more ago was returned. The Dean upon this occasion made a humorous observation about the unpunctuality of the return of things antiquarian. Yet a special latitude would appear to be the special privilege of the cult. The remark of the learned Dr. Plot may be recalled when, after a considerable lapse of time, he was asked to return a fossil specimen

which had been lent to him from Magdalen College Library, Oxford. "Is it not a rule among antiquaries," he observed, "*never to restore?*" Nor did he depart from the old-established rule; at least, the fossil never went back to the College Library.

From the windows of the Town Hall may be seen a little toy-shop, the same building where resided Cromwell's special locksmith, and judging by an engraving of a lock which he made for the Lord Protector, it was an ingenious and wonderful piece of workmanship. The original is said to be six feet in height, and the story goes that in the days that Cromwell went about in fear of assassination, the security of that lock gave him some sort of comfort. But how the doors must have been ruined in adjusting so ponderous a piece of mechanism!

More beautiful is the civic plate, consisting of two Elizabethan batons, a sword, a kind of Charles II. mace, and two formidable-looking staves about five feet in length, which used to be carried by two citizens each night so as to protect the watchman from ten p.m. until daylight. This custom was continued until twenty years ago, and thus another time-honoured institution has followed the rest. There are portraits of the various Earls of Clarendon from

Edward Hyde, Charles II.'s Lord Chancellor, to "the late Earl." But we must remember also that the Hyde earldom died out long since, and that the Villiers creation of 1776 came through a Hyde heiress.

But we haven't yet examined the exterior of this quaint old Town Hall. The basement consists of a series of oaken supports and a staircase open to the weather leading to the room above, and above that a high-pitched Dutch-like roof. The half timbering is presumably an afterthought of modern times, judging by ancient pictures of the building. Between the pillars and under the shelter are the stocks, and a cannon from Sevastopol. The former in olden times used to stand outside, at the further end of the Hall, where was a lock-up, and with reference to this latter obsolete necessity to a town, an amusing story is told of how upon one occasion was imprisoned here for the night a disregarder of the laws who was blessed with the possession of a wooden leg. Nor was this man sufficiently drunk to have lost entire control of his remaining limbs or of the acumen which mentally measures the thickness of incarcerating masonry. The sequel may be readily guessed. Nothing could be easier than to unstrap his leg and with it knock a hole in the

accommodating lath and plaster wall sufficiently large for him to squeeze through.

There is but little else to see in the town. The buildings for the most part are Georgian and later; and the church retains but little of its ancient characteristics, saving the south porch with groined roof and niche, and some unusually eccentric gargoyles.

If upon leaving the town we return the way we came, then keep straight ahead instead of bearing to the left, we shall find ourselves upon the Cricklade road. Midway to Purton village, which lies at equal distances between, a turning to the right leads past the ancestral oaks of Lydiard Park, the seat of the St. Johns for nearly five centuries. They were the ancestors of that witty but treacherous turncoat statesman, Bolingbroke, who could keep neither Hanoverian nor Jacobite secrets. But though the virulent Viscount represented Wootton Bassett in Parliament, he had little to do with Wiltshire, the St. Johns' town house at Battersea being mainly his residence before his exile, and afterwards Dawley, near West Drayton—the luxurious farm where he entertained Pope and Voltaire and other distinguished lights of his day.

The tendencies of the St. Johns were decidedly republican, for Oliver, the Lord Chief Justice of

Pepys' day, who was so undignified as to pull a man's nose in court, married first the usurper's aunt Johanna, and then the Protector's first cousin Elizabeth. He had been Solicitor-General under Charles the First, but afterwards his energy at the time of rebellion won him the nickname of "Noll's dark lantern." However, this Sir John is said to have been born "on the wrong side of the blanket," and therefore does not figure in the family tree.

The son of another Oliver was killed at Edgehill fighting for the Parliamentary side. In the picture gallery of Saltram, near Plymouth, may be seen the painting of a family group, including this youth with his three brothers and sisters. Their father was the first Earl Bolingbroke, a James I. creation from the Crown Manor in Lincolnshire, where Henry IV. was born. This was the junior branch, the Earl's father, Lord Grandison, being the younger brother of Sir John St. John of Lydiard, the great-grandfather of Henry, the prominent figure of Queen Anne's reign. The granddaughter of Sir John was Lucy Hutchinson, the writer of the famous *Memoirs* of the Protectorate period, who, by the way, could through her forbears claim relationship with the Royal Houses of Tudor and Plantagenet, for the father of this same Sir John of

Lydiard was first cousin to Henry VII., his grandmother, Margaret Beauchamp, being also grandmother to that King. Her second husband, John Duke of Somerset, was the great-grandson of Edward III.

The present house at Lydiard is not particularly old, neither has it any pretensions to architectural distinction. The church of Lydiard Tregoze, to give the place its full name, contains much of genealogical interest, and as at Bletsoe, to the north of Bedford, has many curious memorials of the St. Johns. There are knightly effigies kneeling and recumbent, Nicholas St. John and his dame, more retiring than the monumental magnificence of their surroundings would seem to warrant, ensconce themselves behind quaint decorated folding-doors. Sir John St. John and his lady, an heiress of the Farley Hungerfords, were the parents of the profligate Earl of Rochester's mother, but the various Sir Johns and Sir Olivers are a bit confusing; however, handy for reference in the chancel is a gorgeous pedigree of the several Barons and Earls.

Shortly before reaching the village of Purton, a very charming old Jacobean house named Restrop is passed on the left-hand side of the main road. It looks the very ideal of a Manor

House, its wide projecting eaves, quaint lattice windows, and the rugged stone flags of the roof combining in their unspoilt state to give a thoroughly cosy and old-world appearance. The "College Farm" in years gone by belonged to the Hydes, and here the distinguished author of *The Great Rebellion* is said once to have lived. His sire, Henry Hyde, belonged to Purton, but Edward's birthplace was not here but at Dinton, at the southern side of the county, where still stands the modest gabled house where the Chancellor first saw light.

The level Roman way, Ermine Street, runs across the northern end of Cricklade—a sleepy, deserted-looking place, with an old church at either end, each churchyard possessing good specimens of fourteenth-century tabernacled crosses very similar in design. That at St. Sampsons (and possibly the other also, judging from its present cramped position) used to have more elbow-space in the middle of the high street, where one would like to see it reinstated upon the original four stone steps, for their absence gives it an unnecessarily dwarfed appearance. The sculptured figures have disappeared from the several niches, but in the cross at St. Mary's they remain. The two churches widely differ in character. The former, cruciform in

shape, having a lofty extinguisher pinnacled Perpendicular tower; the latter, insignificant in comparison, is peculiar for its little gabled dormer windows in line along the roof of the nave.

Referring to the latter church, the ancient character of the porch has been considerably marred by modern framing. This church contains a carved oak Jacobean pulpit and a fine display of quatrefoil ornamentation along the aisles. St. Sampson's vestry was once a chapel of the influential Hungerfords, to whom, with the Beauchamps and Radnors, there are several armorial shields.

Near Cricklade Bridge the Churn, running merrily from the Cotswold hills, joins the Thames or Isis, but the river, so far navigable, has long since been left in the lurch from a commercial point of view by the Thames and Severn Canal, which flows near by. Still, the riverside hostelries are little affected by this, and do remarkably good business, especially in the summer months. And this recalls a brief sojourn at one of them between here and Abingdon—a very modest unpretentious-looking place, which for evening repast could only supply the most meagre fare in the shape of eggs, which evidently were priced at a corresponding proportion to the item in the Irish hotel bill: "A ha'peth o' milk, tuppence."

The following extract from the visitors' book at the delusive riverside inn, perused just before the aforesaid frugal meal, was as tantalising as Sancho Panza's forbidden and exasperating feast:—

"The chicken and ducks were supreme;
The sweets were an absolute dream.
The breakfasts were choice,
And we all with one voice,
Say the cooking's the best on the stream."

The morning's bill was duly presented and paid, maybe with smiling countenance, but a suitable sequel doggerel having resentfully shaped itself was on the eve of being entered beside the previous visitor's poetic laudation when second thoughts brought compunction, and the following was *not* written:—

"Our surprise at the bill was extreme,
Though externally calmly serene.
We mentally noted
The Inn sign (not quoted),
Among things that are best left unseen."

However, this happened many miles from Cricklade.

And now let us follow more or less the course of the river as far as Lechlade, for hereabouts the narrow winding Thames, spanned at intervals by rustic bridges with rush-grown tributaries imperceptibly increasing the volume of water until at

last it is impossible to convince oneself that this shallow, neglected-looking stream is indeed the same grand waterway that looks so ideally beautiful a little over thirty miles away.

In an earlier chapter we described an old house called "Water End," in Hertfordshire. Here, near Cricklade, by the river are the scanty remnants of another "Water End House," a fine building in Tudor times, upon the site of which is now a farmstead by no means unpicturesque.

Castle Eaton is a cosy little village, the pinnacled tower and odd bell-turret of whose church stand out in a rather level stretch of country. Here, bearing to the north-east, we reach Marston Meysey, a place erroneously associated with the wanderings of Charles II. after Worcester fight, doubtless by being confused with Long Marston in Gloucestershire. The little village street is very sketchable; indeed, one charming old house with fine stone moulded window frames and doorways is a picture from any point of view. Close by, a signpost with refreshing originality points up a meadow path approached by a stile, "To the 'Spotted Cow,'" which sign, it must be confessed, is a welcome change after the hackneyed and everlasting "Trout" so conspicuous along the upper reaches of the Thames. Stonecrop, lichen, and moss flourish upon the cottage roofs, and with the

gay flower-bedecked enclosures makes most fascinating combination of colour.

Of old the Manor belonged to the See of Salisbury. It was exchanged in Elizabeth's reign with the town house of the Sackvilles, a poor bargain so far as John Jewel, the Bishop at the time, was concerned. Dorset House, the bartered property, stood where now is Salisbury Court. It was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666.

At the village of Kempsford, two miles or so to the east, we are again in Gloucestershire, the handsome church of which, embowered in trees, viewed from the opposite bank of the river, with the setting sun tinting it and softening the vivid verdure, is one of those peaceful pictures which linger in the memory. The church (much restored within) contains an altar tomb to one of the Thynnes of Longleat, whose name, by the way, originally was Bouteville, until a representative of the fifteenth century, who lived in one of the Inns of Court, was nicknamed "John of Th'in," which misleading designation, for mere respectability's sake, must have always required accompanying elucidation. When the brief career of this John's wealthy descendant, "Tom of Ten Thousand," was terminated by the adventurer villain Königsmark, the heir to Longleat was the son of Sir Henry Thynne of Kempsford. Sir Thomas, created Viscount

Weymouth in 1682, was one of the peers who in 1688 went in person to Hungerford to hasten the Prince of Orange's advance to London.

Our eastward progress here requires a little puzzling out, for the various waterways, the Thames and Coln and their tributaries, as well as the Severn Canal, conspire to make the way to Lechlade as circuitous as possible. Inglesham churchyard, close by the river, possesses a good "weeping" cross mounted upon steps. The church interior is not so quaint as it was twenty years ago, but it still can boast a "three-decker" as well as framed commandments set up over the chancel arch. We are here, by the way, in a narrow strip of Wiltshire, bordered on the north by Gloucestershire, with Berkshire and Oxfordshire to the east. At Lechlade we step again into the corner point of eastern Gloucestershire. The old-fashioned and trim little market town is far more compact and pleasing than Cricklade. In a wide open square, with the spired church nestled in one corner, old hostelries are conspicuous. Though the gabled "Swan" looks older than the "New" Inn, the latter is by no means young. Its lines are far from beautiful, but for all that it is beautiful in its way: red brick faced with stone quoins, with the unaltered little square window-panes, and a general character and style of the buildings in

Caldecott's hunting pictures. "Ye old bakery" in the vicinity displays its sign with four loaves at allotted distances upon a shelf in the window as specimens of what can be done at this enterprising establishment. The modern Manor House looks as if it would have felt more at home somewhere in the affluent regions of Hampstead or Croydon, but Butler's Court (a Tudor farmstead, within an easy walk), for simplicity of design and proportion has about it that modest distinction which never characterises the modern style of house. The "penance stone" by the church speaks for itself. One is reminded of a stool of repentance which used to stand in Old Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh; the penitential gown worn at West Calder; and the mediæval plait of straw-hair which ladies of easy morals had to wear in public. It is difficult in these days to realise a state of such submission and subjection.

Within Lechlade Church the restorer has been rabid: one might almost wish to see the workmen who at different times have played such havoc posed in the vicinity of the "penance stool" wrapped in the regulation sheet.

Buscot lies on the Berkshire side, and further along Kelmscot, on the Oxfordshire division of the river. The pre-Raphaelite cult and the disciples of the poet-printer-Socialist have made

these river haunts sufficiently famous for any description here. Æsthetic pilgrims to the Manor House will find, it is said, ample Burne-Jonesian art to "enthuse" about without referring to "greeny-yallery" tintings of nature upon the cottage roofs and walls. At Radcot Bridge the Evesham and Swindon main road climbs over the river by a sudden steep grade. It is one of the most ancient and picturesque bridges along the river, having Early English arches and massive parapets, and at the apex the projecting moulded basement of a cross, which when it was standing there must have made this bridge unique in its way. During the Civil War there was here a desperate engagement. The Parliamentary garrison was then quartered at Abingdon, and Faringdon House, a stronghold of some importance, then held for the King, was besieged and the enemy repulsed. Radcot Bridge fortified as an outpost was attacked by the Cromwellians in June, 1645, and after a desperate fight they won the day, taking Sir William Vaughan and Colonel Lyttelton, with a body of two hundred men, prisoners. But over two and a half centuries previously this old bridge was the scene of another encounter between Richard II.'s favourite, de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and the future Henry IV., aided by Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester. De

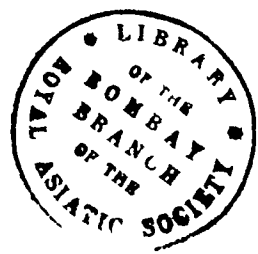
Vere's troops were surrounded, and only by casting off his armour and swimming up the stream did he manage to save his life.

Of Faringdon we shall have something to say by and bye, our direction for the moment being northward to Clanfield, a pretty stream-girt village, with a snug-looking gabled inn facing the clear water. It has Tudor doorways and an iron-studded oak door, all rather disfigured by thick coatings of paint. The aged red brick and the clinging *Ampelopsis Veitchi* made the happiest combination for background, and the harmonious tints were dispersed amidst the richer colouring of a mass of brilliant dahlias nodding over the low garden wall. An inviting lane lined by pollard willows leads towards the church, and a farmyard lavishly furnished with hay-ricks. The first thing that catches the eye when glancing up at the church tower, or the expressive gargoyles at its corners, is a huge mediæval figure of St. Stephen standing in a canopied niche high up by the belfry turret. The eyes are weirdly animated and piercing for an effigy, but the general expression of the face is genial, which is the more remarkable because some thoughtless thrush or starling has built her nest upon the top of Stephen's head, and there with saintly patience it is suffered to remain, notwithstanding the discom-

fort and inconvenience it must occasion. In the belfry some of the bells are the same which pealed merrily or clanged dolefully in Elizabeth's reign, and yet the stolid sentinel in his niche was stationed there three centuries or more before that time. Surely never was so orderly a belfry, for the floor where the ringers stand is thickly lined with carpet. It is recorded upon the tower that in 1843 a flash of lightning struck two men who were working in a meadow close by, and one can but rejoice to think that the same fate did not befall the building, especially St. Stephen. Some seventeenth-century monumental brass tablets may be more legible in their burnished-up and re-mounted condition, and they may look more in keeping with the modern reredos and choir-stalls, yet some of us would have preferred to have seen them as they were originally. There is some good Norman work in an arcade dividing off the nave, and also in the main entrance. The adjacent farm-buildings also show signs of considerable antiquity. In a barn an Early English window is older even than St. Stephen himself, and the little knob finial of the gable gives just the right sort of finish to match a knob *vis-à-vis* upon the roof of the farm residence.

More willow-lined streams are passed on the way to Faringdon, and near the water in one

place is an old house standing in the loveliest of gardens. Its curious oval-shaped stone-framed windows glance over the leafy enclosure and down into the road, as they must have done when Royalist and Parliamentary troops made things a bit more lively than they are to-day.



CHAPTER VII

NORTHERN BERKSHIRE

DESCENDING into Faringdon, the fir-crowned eminence on the left marks the site of the ancient mansion which held out so bravely against the attacks of Cromwell's soldiers in 1645-6. Charles I. himself stopped there after the second battle of Newbury. It was one of the last strongholds to capitulate, and then it did so by Royal command, allowing Sir Robert Pye, the Parliamentary owner (who stands responsible for the loss of the church tower), to have his own again. At that time the town suffered terribly, as may be judged from a collection raised in 1648 to meet the losses of nearly fifty-seven thousand pounds for "repairing the ruin caused to their habitations, goods, and church, which were demolished and burnt by the enemy's garrison."

Upon the downward grade we come upon this

pretty creeper-clad church with its avenue approach of chestnut trees, but, barring the loss of the spire and the present rather squat appearance of the tower, it looks little the worse for the buffeting it received. The various styles from Norman to debased Gothic are unimpaired, the work of the Decorated period being especially fine in the chapel of the Unton or Umpton family. The Pyes, too, had a chapel built in Tudor times, which also remains *in situ*. Among the handsome Unton monuments is that of Sir Edward, who married Anne Seymour, the niece of Henry VIII.'s third Queen, and widow of one of the last Dudleys of the Earls of Warwick. The effigy of Sir Alexander Unton lies with those of his wives on either side, and a row of ten children. Here also is a mural tablet to Sir Henry Unton, who fought beside Sir Philip Sidney when the latter received his death-wound in the skirmish at Zutphen, Unton's bravery being rewarded on the spot by Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Leicester. He afterwards was Elizabeth's Ambassador at the Court of Henry IV. of France, when he fell foul of the proud Duke of Guise, with whom he crossed swords in a duel. A curious panel portrait of him by Mark Gerrard is in existence, the background of which consists of various episodes in his career, including not only his death-bed and

funeral procession, but this very monument at Faringdon, evidently a posthumous work commissioned by his, Sir Henry's, widow, who erected the tomb, with her own effigy kneeling at its feet, and by the irony of fate some unsympathetic restorer has carried away her ladyship from the place to which she has a particular right and put her in the Pye chapel apart from all her husband's people. In the church also is a memorial inscription to Sir Marmaduke Rawdon, the Royalist Governor who held Faringdon House so bravely against Cromwell, for the Protector himself is said to have led the assault upon one occasion.

The lords of the manor of Henry III.'s reign had the privilege of fining any tenant's daughter who was guilty of incontinency, and the only remedy for exempting the erring lady from that exactment was for her to present herself at the justice-room carrying a black sheep upon her back and then making full confession of her crime —as unpleasant an ordeal as that enforced upon widows at the village of Enborne, in the southern part of Berkshire (a few miles to the south-west of Newbury). In the event of transgression here, the life interest in the deceased's estate could only be recovered by riding into court on the back of a black ram and then repeating some ribald verses.

In an old book of churchwarden's accounts

of the time of Henry VIII., the following is the official formula that was read to them upon being admitted into office: "Cherchye wardenys thys shall be your charge to be true to God and to the cherche for love nor favor off no man wythe in thys paroche to w'hold any ryght to the cherche, but to reserve the dettys to hyt belongythe or ellys to goe to the devell."

The old Town Hall, with truncated hip-roof and oaken beam supports, stands in the middle of the market place. In one corner of the building is the grim lock-up, with iron grating above the door. On either side of the Town Hall the ancient hostelries, the "Crown" and the "Bell," conspicuously display their signs, and it is difficult to say which of the two attracts the more attention. The lively painting of the former is quite a welcome splash of colour in rather a grey and grimy-looking town; the enormous model of a bell for the opposite establishment, if more subdued in tone, has a more pushing way of presenting itself to the public gaze, and with the projecting bays and diminutive white window-frames around it has quite a personality of its own.

In travelling eastward from Faringdon a Jacobean house with wide projecting eaves is passed, and then an odd and ghostly-looking house with singular rounded bay at either end. In

going this way the hill which we noticed upon approaching the town is climbed, and, there being a fork in the road, the traveller London-bound may take his choice whether to go *viâ* Abingdon and Henley, or *viâ* Wantage and Reading. However, our mission being to meander, we will temporise, taking the former road as far as Buckland, then diverging to the north or south as attractions may present themselves.

Beyond Faringdon hill, a turning to the right leads to Wadley House, the ancient stone-built mansion where the Untons, whose tombs we have examined in the church, resided in the sixteenth century. Nearly adjoining the Wadley Estate is another old manor appertaining to Stanford-in-the-Vale (which village lies some distance away to the east). A branch of the once-prominent family of Fettiplace, whose name crops up so frequently in Berkshire and Oxfordshire and adjoining counties, lived here at Stanford Place before the present Jacobean house was erected by the Knollys. Their ancestry harks back a considerable lapse of time, for it was one Adam who purchased the manor of North Denchworth, some five miles away to the south-east, from Ralph de Camois, one of those resolute Barons who made King John's life such a burden to him. At Stanford several of the rooms are lined with fine old

tapestry hangings, as well as curious panel paintings.

Buckland, which is close upon four miles from Faringdon, is a pretty little scattering village just off the main road, and very conspicuous is its great mansion built in the reign of George II., a more curious than beautiful structure, the portico of which half-way up the building gives the appearance as if the unornamental basement ought to be cut away so as to bring down the portico to the level of the entrance-steps. The chimneys clustered together *en bloc* form a kind of crown to the roof. On either side a long corridor leads to a small annexe with domed covering. The earlier mansion of Buckland still exists, and has now to play second fiddle in the way of stables. This was built on more poetic lines, perhaps because the supposed son of Chaucer lived on the spot in a still earlier building. But Georgian taste has demoralised this building into a style distinctly of the Strawberry Hill type. An interesting Stuart relic is preserved in the mansion, a chemise of Mary Queen of Scots, maybe the very one which her grandson, James II., found at the well of St. Winifred's and carried away with him. After Chaucer's time, a granddaughter who became Duchess of Suffolk lived there, and perhaps it was a Chaucer descendant who penned the

following epitaph in the church to the memory of a lady of the name of Summers, who died in 1631 :—

"Thy cruelty, O death, complayne
That thou a harmless mayde hast slayne.
Boast not thy victory, to dust,
That this weake vessell thou hast thrust.
For who shall thinke thy hande to scape,
That hast committed such a rape
On this lov'de mayde, and basely throwne
Her chastity under this stone.
Yet grieve not parents her to loose
Whom Haven it selfe hath deignd to choose;
But rather joy that shee was sent
As pure to Heaven as she was lent.
There dwelt her love, and when she dide,
Shee there was made a glorious bride."

On the south side of the chancel is an Easter sepulchre and altar tomb, and in a recess the enshrined heart of a Holcot of Barcote (a manor lying to the west of Buckland, now represented by a modern building in the Tudor style). The effigy within the sepulchre is that of a cross-legged Crusader in chain-mail and close-fitting bassanet. There are also memorials to the Yates of Charney Basset, who held the manor of Buckland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that of John Yate, who died in 1578, being the best preserved. The chancel screen retains its original colouring, and the piscina is odd in shape; but altogether the inside of this church has a modern look.

The old manor of Pusey, within a couple of miles to the south-east, like Buckland, has given way to a Georgian structure of plainer design by the same architect. The family of Pusey held their lands by horn service, a tenure granted at the eleventh century by Canute the Dane, who is said to have had a Palace at Cherbury Camp, about a mile to the east of Pusey, and, says tradition, thus rewarded an officer in his army for discovering some Saxon ambuscade. The male line of the Puseys failed in the time of Queen Anne with Charles Pusey. His sister Jane, the heiress, married a Mr. Allen, of Temple Guiting (mentioned in an earlier chapter), and the historic horn was located in the Manor House there until the Allens gave up residence. Mrs. Allen's son John, who took the name of Pusey, leaving no issue, the relic descended to his nephew (the son of his wife's brother), Philip Bouverie, who also assumed the name of Pusey, and from him the horn and tenure have descended to the present owner. The horn is not kept in the house, but in the strong-room of a bank in London. Upon the band of silver which with little legs like the front-paws of a toy-terrier supports this curiosity is this inscription :—

"King Knoude geve Uyllyam Pewse thys horne to holde by thy lond." The lettering of the inscription, however, belongs to a much later date

than the eleventh century, so though the horn is doubtless the original, the mounting is unmistakably a renovation.

These "horn-blow lands" are to be found in several other places: at Borstall in Buckinghamshire, and Horton and Manningham in Yorkshire, for instance, the horns of which are also in existence. The ancient "Esturmy horn," which is still treasured at the seat of the Bruces, Tottenham House, in Wiltshire, is no less remarkable among such relics of ancient tenures.

Pusey's classic little Georgian church is enclosed by a yew-hedge. The view from the churchyard of the running river shut in by beech woods is delightful and quite romantic.

We are now in the famous vale of the White Horse, that well-known highest eminence of the Berkshire downs being only some eight miles away to the south-west, and here it may be said, without following the well-beaten track immediately surrounding that elongated, ferret-like, turf-cut steed, that to see the county at its wildest one cannot do better than follow the "switchback" Roman road which runs from Wiltshire to the eastern side of Berkshire, all signs of habitation having migrated to the villages lying in the valley to the north of it.

Though the Uffington White Horse is the most

famous of these hill-side monsters, many others are to be found, in Wiltshire in particular. The horse, for example, that is cut on Bratton Hill, near Westbury, though less than half the magnitude of that in Berkshire, is much more natural and shapely, and not in the disjointed sections that are so puzzling at a nearer view. The Westbury horse is said to date from King Alfred's time, but the rest in Wiltshire are more or less of modern date. At Cher Hill, near Calne, for instance, the quadruped was cut in 1780, and taking the others consecutively: at Alton Barnes, near Pewsey, in 1786; at Marlborough, in 1804; at Broad Hinton, in 1838; and Broad Town (between Swindon and Calne), in 1864. At Kilburn, in Yorkshire, situated between York and Thirsk, is another White Horse of modern cutting (1857). Then there is the Red Horse at Tysoe, Warwickshire, and the Weymouth steed, with long flowing tail and a man astride his back—an addition of later years—supposed to represent his Majesty King George III., who for politeness' sake, as his charger couldn't be turned round, might have had the grace to turn with his face towards the tail and town. In point of antiquity the Sussex and the Dorset giants are supposed to outrival all the rest. The stolid-looking Wilmington "man," with a staff in either hand, is familiar to frequenters of

the South Coast, where the Downs near Lewes run parallel with the line; while the prehistoric giant, club in hand, on the lofty eminence above Cerne Abbas, must be known to all road travellers upon the northern way from Weymouth and Dorchester to Sherborne, and thence to Bath or Bristol.

Returning from these colossal cuttings in the chalk to remote villages that prefer a retired life, we find ourselves in the vicinity of Charney Basset and Stanford-in-the-Vale, which lie to the south of Pusey, both situated upon the banks of the river Ock, which runs to Abingdon and there joins the Thames. Stanford-in-the-Vale, pretty as its name may be, is a poor-looking place. Still, it possesses a fine old church containing much good Early English and Decorated work. The piscina particularly is remarkable for the reliquary which surmounts it. The Elizabethan pulpit and font with extinguisher cover are both of carved oak—that is to say, the font itself, excepting the basin, is entirely of wood, a very unusual thing. But the dark corner at the west end of the church shows it to the worst advantage. The Rood-loft stairs and adjacent squint in the wall of the north aisle are also curious. The former has two little windows looking down into the body of the church: the latter is rudely cut out with stone

pillar support, the aperture being big enough to walk through. The brass of the demi-figure of an ecclesiastic in the chancel is that of Roger Campdene, who died in 1398. The church of Charney Basset is a building of entirely different character: the oddest little structure with strangely flattened tower, embattled roof, and double bell-cot. Together with the adjacent Manor House it forms a pleasing group—that is to say, at a little distance, where the several features are not too distinct; for a nearer view of the Manor discloses a melancholy spectacle of injudicious restoration. The dwelling has been far more ruined than a ruined chapel standing by its side, through whose broken windows may be espied an open timber roof and king-post. The main building has been utterly spoiled by the addition of chimneys which are entirely out of character.

An old man who provided the key of the church described how things used to be when the Dewes were in possession. On Sundays then, the little private entrance to the church was not as now, blocked up; and the high-backed pew could be reached in privacy. The squint on the left-hand side of the chancel is rather an extraordinary one, for, like that at Stanford, it forms a narrow passage, through which one can pass into the north aisle. Above it is a spirited figure struggling with

two dragons, and thus going one better than St. George. Other formidable griffins appear upon the richly sculptured tympanum of the north entrance doorway. This and the south door, and the chancel-arch as well, are all good examples of Norman work. A headless early sixteenth-century brass is that of Alicia, the daughter of John and Agnes Estbury.

Of the Yates who once possessed the Manor there appear to be no memorials. The family migrated to Buckland in the sixteenth century, where, as before mentioned, their tombs are to be found. The Manor House of Lyford, which is close to Charney on the south side of the river Ock, was also held by the Yates for a couple of centuries or more, and here in the reign of Elizabeth it was that the Jesuit priest, Edmund Campian, was concealed and captured in a "priest's hole," and, condemned for conspiracy at Rheims and Rome, executed in 1581. In the same hiding-place two other priests were taken, John Colleton and Thomas Ford. The latter also suffered death, but Father Colleton proved an *alibi*, for when he was supposed to be plotting abroad he was really at Gray's Inn. In the Salt and Beauchamp Towers of the Tower of London, his name, which he carved upon the walls, may still be seen. The character of the gabled Manor House with pronounced

LATTON CROSS

MANOR HOUSE, LYFORD

chimney-stack and remains of the moat has not been spoiled, excepting by the introduction of new doors and windows, but it is only a portion of the original house. The plain little church is well worth examination. The oaken framework of Gothic arches supporting the belfry, alone is a study in solidity of construction, each of the four huge pillars being a tree of no mean proportions. Some of the old benches remain, and the pulpit is of carved oak. The piscina with sculptured projecting bowl also is a good specimen of its kind. There are low-side windows in the chancel. Nor must the lion of Charles II.'s royal arms be overlooked, for his expression of wrath is positively alarming. He has been brought down almost to the level of two Cromwellian stools, and that has doubtless upset his dignity. The founder of the Lyford Almshouses will be mentioned later. This prim little red brick structure built round a courtyard, however, has no claims to architectural distinction.

Denchworth, to the south about a couple of miles, is one of the prettiest villages hereabouts. What little there is of it consists of one short street lined mostly with timber framed and straw-thatched cottages. As one advances from the north and west further to the south-east, it is noticeable how the stone houses get fewer and fewer, giving

place to the more snug-looking lath and plaster, half-timber, herring-bone red brick, and thatch. The remains of the village cross by the wayside is very stunted, still none the less welcome from the pictorial point of view. The fine cruciform church stands at the end of the street and mutely speaks of better times when the Hydes were lords of the manor, a name that lingers in "Hyde Farm" close by. In the chancel are their brasses, knights in exceptionally wide-footed armour formally stationed by their dames. The inscription of one of these knights, William Hyde, who died in "Bloody" Mary's reign, is, on the face of it, or rather the reverse side of it, a lasting brazen affront upon the Sovereign who captured Berwick-on-Tweed as English dominion. Fresh from this triumph, Edward III. laid the foundation stone of Bisham Abbey, which ceremony being accomplished, the victory won by the English archers on Halidon Hill was duly recorded upon the brass tablet. But over two centuries later it came in handy for another use. It was probably at the time that the present riverside abbey of Bisham was built by the Hobys that some enterprising dealer of Tudor days in scrap brass walked off with the commemoration tablet, which after being sought for for years was accidentally discovered here at Denchworth at the time the church was

undergoing restoration. The numerous children depicted upon the accompanying plate would never have stooped to play so underhand a game of Hyde and Seek: the idea would have turned them also in their graves.

Such "palimpsest" brasses are fortunately few and far between, and for this reason perhaps it would be as well to be cautious, for some day a twentieth-century dealer in scrap metal might find a far better market than existed in the sixteenth century. We have before called attention to the unaccountable way church helmets have of getting off their brackets, and these denuded supports when thus exposed to view may be likened to the sailor's parrot, who didn't say much but thought "*a deal.*"

The prolific Hyde family just alluded to consists of twelve sons and eight daughters, and yet this Denchworth branch is no longer locally represented, the descendants having migrated some miles to the north to Longworth, near the Oxfordshire border. William, the father of the large family, died in 1557, and his son and successor, William, in 1567. Elizabeth Hyde, one of the eight daughters before mentioned, married a kinsman of Anthony Foster, of Cumnor (which is situated about nine miles, as the crow flies, to the north-east of Denchworth), and during the unfor-

tunate Amy Robsart's sojourn at that gloomy Hall she visited the Hydes at Denchworth Manor, presumably accompanied by a Foster. The old seat of the Hydes is still standing, so that disappointed pilgrims to the dreary waste where the Hall of the Fosters stood, may conjure up more realistic visions at Denchworth, although unfortunately "Madam Dudley's" restless spirit never walks so far afield from Cumnor. The Manor House is still surrounded on three sides by a moat, and is approached by a fine avenue of elms. It was built in the fifteenth century (before which time the Hydes possessed the lands), and retains features belonging to that era as well as panelled rooms of later date.

As the Hydes dwindled in more recent times, so the population of Denchworth decreased in proportion. In the reign of William III. a library was formed as a fixture for the Parvise above the church porch, after the style of the little book collection in Wimborne Minster. This Denchworth library amounted to some one hundred and fifty books, so that, roughly estimating the present population at about that figure, each man, woman, and child had no cause to complain of dearth of literature. Some of the tomes were chained as at Wimborne, but it may be questioned whether this provision for safety would have kept

them from the fate of a fifteenth-century tomb which has been denuded of its brasses, for an original Caxton *Golden Legend* of 1483, in these days of collecting competition, means a small fortune in itself; a Cranmer Bible, too, is a thing not met with every day. To the collection of books Bishop Burnet presented a copy of his *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, published in 1699. The Caxton is now safely housed in the Bodleian Library, while the other volumes are wisely kept in the vicarage, the literature being perhaps a little heavy for modern village taste.

To the north-east of Denchworth are the villages of East and West Hanney, the latter lying between the Childrey and Letcomb brooklets, which uniting in Nor brook join the Ock river near Abingdon. At East Hanney, with its new church and modern village cross, there is little to detain us. West Hanney Church, like that at Denchworth, is cruciform in shape, and has many interesting monuments of the Ayshcombes of Lyford, and the brasses here are some of the best in northern Berkshire. These large effigies, all in excellent preservation, are in the floor of the chancel covered by matting, for the removal of which a small fee goes towards church expenses. Among them are the figures of John and Oliver Ayshcombe. Oliver founded the old Lyford

Almshouses in 1611. He is in dress of the ruff and trunk-hose fashion of the first James, and by his side are his wife, Martha Yate, with four sons and two daughters. John Ayshcombe of Lyford, who died in 1592, is provided with two wives, ten sons, and four daughters. Here also is Sir Christopher Lytcot, Sheriff of Berkshire, with his two wives. He is cased in full plate armour, with the additional discomfort of ruff of prodigious proportions. Sir Christopher died at Basildon, near Goring, where his name has long been forgotten, submerged by later residents. Sir Christopher was a man of mark in his day, having received the honour of knighthood before Rouen in 1591 for his bravery fighting for King Henry IV. of France, when that monarch, at the close of the Valois dynasty, had to hold his right of succession by force. The Earl of Essex was sent with English troops to aid Henry's cause, and Lytcot, who was related to the Earl by marriage, accompanied him.

Also in armour, but of a little earlier period, when the greaves were smaller and chain mail was more in evidence about the loins, is the effigy of Sir Humphrey Cheney, who one might think had taken the hint about the insecurity of church helmets, for he has secured his to his pauldron by a stout chain. Sir Humphrey belonged to West

Woodhay, near Newbury (an estate afterwards owned by the Darrells and Rudyerds), and was descended from the Cheynes (Chenies), of the Buckinghamshire village so named, one of whom, the giant Sir John, had the distinction of being unhorsed by King Richard on Bosworth Field. Other features of interest in the church are a fine Norman entrance door (which shows to disadvantage the modern arch of the porch in front of it); a tub-shaped font covered with an ornamental design; a Jacobean pulpit, two odd heads placed close together on the capital of a column; and some remains of the old glass in the windows. The short, square belfry is now interiorly disconnected with the body of the church. The steep stairway, formed of solid wedges of oak, has the sturdy and rugged appearance that it had when the Gothic builders first constructed it.

West Hanney should stand high on the list of healthy villages if longevity is anything to go by, for a Mrs. Bowles was interred here in 1718, and she was born in 1594. To have been able to include in one's reminiscences even hearsay evidence of such noteworthy events as the death of Good Queen Bess, the Powder Plot, the Civil War, the Restoration, the Revolution, and the '15 Jacobite Insurrection was an achievement to be proud of,

and one that even in early Georgian times was worth the consideration of enterprising publishers. Not far from the church is an odd-shaped red brick house of Queen Anne's time, and more sketchable in a lane near by, a gabled cottage with thatched roof and pretty little dormer window, with a line of pollard yews in front.

Beyond East Hanney, eastward, the hedges begin to disappear, and open views are obtained on all sides. To the left the country is flat and uninteresting; to the right more elevated land, until the downs loom in the distance five miles or so away.

Steventon is about four miles from East Hanney. A stranger travelling along the high road northward bound for Abingdon, or southward for Newbury, would pass through this village without seeing any of its chief beauties. Passengers on the Great Western line have a better opportunity, for the main line passes within a stone's-throw of its quaintest part, accessible otherwise only by side lanes and footpaths. Turning out of the main road towards the south-west, you come upon an ancient causeway paved with pebbles and shaded by a formal avenue of trees. The peculiarity of this old causeway consists of the continual breaks. You ascend a flight of rugged steps and walk along a distance of fifty

yards or so, then comes another dip, and up again once more, and so on to the entire length. Yet the causeway is by no means the most picturesque feature of this by-road, for one charming old cottage succeeds another, delightful in variety of line and colour, each more beautiful than the last, until one wonders how they can have escaped the treatment which is the lot of the majority of village dwellings. This spot should be an object lesson to "restorers" and "improvers" in general, if only to show them how ten times more attractive an old building looks if it be only left alone.

The houses on the left-hand side of this by-road are mostly Jacobean, with markedly fine and characteristic Charles I. windows. On the opposite side of the road there is less of architectural interest, but the long thatched roofs which sweep down within a few feet of the ground add not a little to the old-world picture. Here and there a rush-grown streamlet with pollarded willows just shows itself, with light harmonies of silver green to mingle with the warm tints of old red brick and tile.

The first house of any distinction has fine carved bargeboards; the next a handsome lattice window with carved oak framework of unusual and beautiful rounded design. The third also has a fine

window, overhanging roof, and the massive chimneys of the period. You cross the line at a level-crossing, and there is more variety still. Here is a house having a piled-up group of gables faced with red tiling, and with queer little porch beneath. The last house in the row, standing at a corner facing the river and church, is perhaps the finest of them all. Its leaning overhanging storeys are adorned with great carved oak pendants. Some of the gables are creeper-covered, and an enormous chimney stack suggests a spacious ingle-nook within, and the whole block of buildings is in that unaltered and unspoiled condition as irresistible to the artist in search of a sympathetic subject as the lamplight is to the moth. Whoever may be the landed possessor who guards these remarkable old buildings so carefully, we can only pray long may he or she live in the land.

CHAPTER VIII

NORTHERN BERKSHIRE (*continued*).

IT was Sunday morning and close upon service time when we reached Steventon Church. In setting forth from our quarters for the night, ample time had been allowed for the usual saunter round, with a wide marginal allowance to cover the possibilities of key hunting, although as a rule Sunday means unlocked doors; but that wonderful array of old houses and the curious raised causeway made to dodge the floods, coming quite as a surprise, threw out all calculations of time, and therefore a very casual and hasty glance had to suffice for the church, for the sexton stationed beneath the buttressed tower arches in the body of the building was pealing the final call, and a file of children were clattering in with noisy tread.

The rose and ball-flower ornamentation upon the summit of the pillars of these arches is richly

sculptured, and altogether the Decorated period is much in evidence. The sturdy oaken bench-ends with their graceful Gothic curves fortunately have not been removed to make place for the staring yellow things which greet one nowadays in so many country churches. The size of the poor-box, with three compartments for separate charities, seems out of all proportion to the size of the village. The date of the carved oak box upon the stunted pedestal is 1633, which speaks of times of squeezing taxations more terrible even than the present, so it is doubtful that voluntary contributions flowed in more lavishly even in those days of extortion. A Plantagenet worthy, in a long gown (one Richard Do), is shown in brass effigy at the foot of the chancel stairs. He originally had a wife on either side, but one of them has fled. The drain of the piscina is curious, being a perforated rosette in high relief.

Some of the old people wending their way to morning service were fine types of healthy, honest country folk, for rustic Berkshire in this particular can hold its own with any other county, for though far from remote from London, conditions in many parts are more old-fashioned and unspoiled than in some of the distant corners of the Island. Not that all are still content to die in the same

Old House, Steventon

Old House, Steventon

parish in which they were born. Far from it. A comfortable old couple with whom we had a chat were proof of this; at least, one of the pair was hoping one day to persuade her better-half to migrate to New Zealand. By accident, in the course of conversation, a tender string was touched upon. They had lost a favourite son in the tragedy of Ladysmith, for Steventon, like every other village in England, sent its representatives to the Boer War, and alas! how few villages there are that got all their beloved "boys" back again! To change the subject, and out of idle curiosity, we inquired whether this good couple knew the name of Woodley, for from the little village of Milton, about a mile from Steventon, came an old nurse connected with our very earliest recollections. And here again was a fine type of rural Berkshire, and a very handsome old lady, too, with a wonderful curl on either side of the face, shown to advantage by a still more wonderful ribboned cap, which important headgear was carried everywhere in a special bandbox. It was quite delightful to find that this old lady was well remembered, although long since her mission in this world had ended, and the chances are quite half a century had elapsed since last she had visited her native place. The Woodley family, we afterwards discovered, hailed

originally from a village so named a little to the east of Reading.

Drayton, a little over a mile from Steventon, to the north, has nothing like the charm of the latter village, yet for all that possesses some interesting ancient buildings. Its church, however, contains many curiosities, from the gargoyles on the porch (depicting priests astride the backs of dragons, forcing the monsters' mouths open) to dispiriting epitaphs, such as the following, to the wife of Richard Tyrrell:—

> "Time swept by overwhelming tide
> My faithfull partner from my side.
> And you of yours deprived may be
> As unexpectedly as me."

Some tastefully carved wood tracery and spandrils in the upper part of the porch might well be taken for old work, but it was executed by the late rector. The piscinæ form quite a study of styles and periods. That in the south aisle is Early English, with central pillar and a double drain. The square one in the south wall of the nave has a bold bordering of floreated ornamentation. That in the north aisle has the early trefoil arch. Many of the bench-ends with carved sides and moulded tops are the original ones. The pulpit and poor-box are Jacobean, and the rood-loft is now a gallery. The two

principal curiosities, however, are in the south aisle: an aumbry with its original oak door and ornamental iron work and the ancient primitive bolt lock; and a very remarkable piece of sculptuary in alabaster, or rather there are six pieces, which form the various scenes from the New Testament. Considering that this reredos remained buried for centuries, it is in a fine state of preservation, all the figures in bold relief being intact and preserving their original colouring and gilding. In the scene of the betrayal, the Gothic armour of the soldiers with short, rounded breast and back pieces, and the very pronounced gorget, is a faithful representation of fifteenth-century fashion in steel. At Sandford, mentioned hereafter, a carving in alabaster of the Assumption was unearthed, having been buried face downwards, it is said for preservation. But the plan usually adopted was to place such carvings in a position where they were likely to be trodden upon, an example of the narrow-minded forethought when iconoclasts were rabid in the land.

Drayton Manor House, with stately entrance gate facing a clipped yew summer-house with a giant peacock on top of it, looked empty and forlorn, and the bill of a recent sale remaining upon the garden wall spoke eloquently enough. An old villager related a sad story of the late

owner, and then went on to say that the older part of the house was reputed to have hidden priests in times of religious persecution, and that one side of the house had no windows lest people should "see the monks at worship." This information was quite sufficient to whet one's appetite, so the gardener was sought, and being found, readily offered to act as cicerone. He led the way through bare, low-ceilinged rooms to the more ancient and evidently long disused side of the mansion: ghostly, dilapidated, and thick with cobwebs, the wainscoted walls had large panel openings into capacious cupboards. Whether these ever in turn also fell back to command of "Open, Sesame," leading to mysterious regions beyond, one cannot say, but making an uncomfortable ascent towards the roof, a bare garret was pointed out as the "Roman Catholic Chapel," where, indeed, were ample spaces into which a priest could slip should he feel so inclined, and, indeed, several other spaces in the floor where, whether inclined or not, people had every facility for making a precipitate disappearance.

The back of the house had a sad and neglected look, a striking contrast to the gardens around, which were gay and in the trimmest order. The man in charge took a natural pride in the result of his horticultural labours, but the prospect he

had in view of being taken with the property when a purchaser should come along was, of course, quite a matter of chance, and his future outlook would indeed be sad if he had to say good-bye to the familiar surroundings.

Upon the way to Milton the Ock stream, lined by larch and willow, is crossed at a dreamy spot near a water mill, where the river on the further side of the dam (when we saw it, at least) was level with the road. Milton in point of prettiness will not compare with its neighbouring villages, and the church has been much restored; the Manor, also a Jacobean house, was considerably altered in the reign of the third George. This manor, which also contains a Roman Catholic Chapel, once appertained to Abingdon Abbey, and after the Dissolution was granted by Henry VIII. to his favourite, Thomas Wriothesley, that mild and amiable Lord Chancellor, who himself would ply the levers of the rack in his enthusiastic desire to make the wretched victims, undergoing torture, recant.

To the south of Milton are the Hendreds, East and West. The Manor of the former was held for many centuries by the Eyston family, who possessed their private chapel here so far back as the time of Henry III., a Catholic chapel that in later reigns of persecution was provided with a

small concealed room, which to still later generations was entirely unknown until an old plan revealed its existence. The John Eyston and his wife of Elizabeth's reign, who are buried in the church, are said to have harboured priests, and, considering the additional accommodation at Lyford and Drayton, the neighbourhood offered exceptional facilities for dodging the rack. As to whether another ancient Manor hard by will dodge the threatened sweeping reforms of the Chancellor of the Exchequer may be an open question. This latter "King's Manor" stewardship is the gift of that Government official for all time, a sort of gentle step down after resigning a seat in the House. The writhing middle class, which so long has suffered from extortion, would surely rejoice if the Chancellor would only extend his grasping a little more and take the stewardship for himself. But it would be an uncomfortable village to take up residence in after resignation, for the fact of the Eystons holding lands for so many centuries would permanently rankle in so democratic a mind. The poor of the parish would disappear, of course, but then what would become of "Spicer's Charity," which here provides for "the preachment of a sermon," with accompanying gratuitous loaves on a certain day of the year? And the provision of the charity is

an extensive one, for it is to last until "the world's end"!

The village, like most hereabouts, is quaintly pretty. It climbs up hills to the various points of the compass with rows of steep-roofed cottages of plaster, thatch, and timber, standing high upon the banks that skirt the road. There are also half-timbered buildings and ancient gables of red brick, with queer old windows peculiar to the first half of the seventeenth century, examples of which are by no means uncommon in northern Berkshire. The old entrance gateway of Hendred House reveals behind high walls just enough of the ancient mansion to make one wish for more. It is fortunately entirely unspoiled. The ruinous monastery chapel on the higher ground looks very sad and forlorn, for long since it has been put to mundane uses. The fine old church which lies in the valley has been much restored within, but the carved oak pulpit and elaborate canopy with oak pendants remains as of yore, and affixed to the woodwork is the ancient hourglass and stand used when sermons were measured by sand.

West Hendred, situated just off the main road in a hollow, is also very pretty, and has many old thatched and timbered cottages; indeed, further south towards the downs Berkshire may be seen at its best.

Harwell, about two and a half miles to the east on the road to Wallingford, also possesses many sketchable buildings. An ancient farmstead standing a little way back from the road, sufficiently far to ensure a snug feeling of retirement, and scarcely near enough to the road to judge its actual age, has an air of restful peace and quiet. The arch of its oaken porch probably was not constructed later than the fifteenth century, and the pert-looking bird clipped out of yew in front looks proud of its antiquity. Such farms sleeping in the summer sunshine always give one the impression of peace and quiet—a false one, maybe, for when one happens to take up temporary residence, say for a week or so, in such an abode of bliss, sundry unthought-of sounds assert themselves during the day's routine. We recall, for example, a little farm in Wales, where milk was strangely scarce, and yet countless cows were milked each afternoon, and cans innumerable dispatched to the nearest railway station. And it is these milkcans which out-rival anything ever invented in their noisy capabilities of wrecking the nerves. At the railway termini one may forgive overworked porters; at least, one rarely has time, if one has the courage to denounce the *modus operandi* of hurling empty cans about. It seems to be a privilege monopolised by the

milk trade, as any victim may recall who has tried to evade the wanton clattering when the early morning chariot arrives. But this ordeal is more particularly confined to town and suburbs. In the heart of the peaceful country the pandemonium in the budding morning at a milk-farm is terrible indeed to those who are possessed with sensitive drums to the ears, and those who may be seeking a rest-cure might do worse than bear milk-can possibilities in mind.

At the southern end of Harwell a lane turns off towards the church, and at the corner stands another nice old gabled house with the same description of latticed window as at Hendred and Steventon, and the always welcome herring-bone brickwork between the timber beams. Of old the Manor of Harwell belonged to the Royal House of Plantagenet, and a small shield of arms at the top of the east window of the church is a memento of the disastrous reign of Edward II. The eagles here displayed are those of this weak king's witty and valiant Gascon favourite, Piers de Gaveston, who fell a victim to the all-powerful baronage in 1312. The Earldom of Cornwall revived for him had formerly belonged to his Royal patron's grand-uncle, Richard Plantagenet, the younger son of King John and brother-in-law of Earl Simon of Montfort; and that Earl's arms,

environed by lions and fleurs-de-lis, also used to be in the church windows, and properly should be returned to them, as this interesting glass is still in existence. Church restoration and new memorial windows have been responsible for much in the days when heraldic glass was not sufficiently valued or appreciated.

A sculptured figure of a Merry Andrew on the north wall of the chancel looks but little perturbed at such despoilment, and the twisted state of his nether limbs is proof enough that he has emptied the contents of the black-jack which he holds in his hand. Two other figures also provided with flexible limbs, ensconce themselves on either side of the chancel arch. Their legs and arms are so much mixed that to disentangle them would require both skill and patience. Looking above the heads of these contortionists, the great oaken beams of a "King-post" roof presents an interesting lesson in ingenuity and strength of construction. Among the monuments are Elizabethan brass effigies of the Jennens family. A sire who was the first to die gives his widow and eleven children brief but good advice :—

"Good wife and children agree,
Serve the Lord and come to mee."

Similar advice as to agreement might well have

been given by the Rev. Christopher Elderfield, a native of Harwell, who at the time of the Protectorate left "lands for the purpose of purchasing in the spring of every year two milch cows to be given to two of the poorest men in the parish of Harwell (burthened with families) for their sustentation." Between the difficulty of finding pasturage in land chiefly arable, and satisfactorily determining who were actually the poorest, a middle course had to be resorted to. If the rents would run to a couple of oxen, all the better; if not, sufficient beef was bought to go as far among the needy as funds would admit. A mural slab to the benefactor is in the western end of the church, where several old candle standards are stowed away.

The picturesque villages of East and West Hagbourne lie to the south-east of Harwell. So far the country has been more or less open, with few hedges and a wide prospect on all sides; and in late summer the acres of ripe corn swaying in the breeze and glittering in the sunshine; the wild bordering by scarlet poppies, and the peeps of the blue horizon, leave behind a cheery impression of contentment and prosperity. Near the Hagbournes we quit this breezy, open country, and plunge into deep and shady lanes overhung by tall hedgerows. These narrow ways twist this

way and that, with here and there a cottage thickly roofed with straw, the width of eaves affording amply protected quarters for sundry families of swallows, who, ever flitting in and out, appear as restless and unsettled as the modern anti-stay-at-home housewife. The tiny village of West Hagbourne consists of a few of these snug, thatched cottages standing in their bowery, rustic enclosures, and all around wide stretching cherry orchards, which in the springtime look as if the trees had been exposed to a heavy snowstorm. There once was a church, but it has long since disappeared, that of East Hagbourne now sufficing for the two villages. Between these two, at a still smaller hamlet, Coscote, again are several subjects for the sketch book: fascinating old farmsteads with curious odd corners, porch, or windows, irregular outbuildings, or crumbling walls tinted by nature's inimitable colouring. Those who have a liking for such things will certainly "enthuse" here, but, like the almond sugaring of a youngster's slice of birthday cake, the *bonne bouche* is held in reserve. You follow along those circuitous lanes a little way, then suddenly alight upon East Hagbourne, which, indeed, is a gem to feast the eyes upon. How strange it is that a strikingly beautiful spot should prompt the by no means uncommon observation, "Just like a

Old House, Coscote

Old House, Steventon

scene in the theatre!" No great compliment when you come to think of it; nature playing second fiddle to art. But as the scene painter naturally excludes everything that is ugly and out of harmony with his composition, the triumph must necessarily be his, and nature simple and unadorned, under certain circumstances of colouring, or light and shade, and where ugly and commonplace objects do not intrude to mar the effect, is likened to the painter's high ideal. Now, entering East Hagbourne has just such an unreasoning effect. From the very fact that nothing obtrudes, as almost invariably something does, to spoil the beauty in one way or another, you are involuntarily reminded of some stage scene. The grouping of fore-shortened gables on either side of the lofty village cross raised upon its massive steps; the broad masses of foliage beyond relieved by other gable ends and chimney stacks; the beauty of general outline, to say nothing of soft colouring of old red brick and timber grey with age; and finally, as we saw it, bathed in the golden glow of a summer sunset—all combined to make so fascinating a picture that its very rarity was sufficient to justify the comparison.

The first impression over, doubtless a minute examination would reveal very careful and skilled

restoration here and there, but with the sun low in the west we were well content to take things leisurely and look around for a night's lodging. The day was Sunday, however, and we know what Sundays are in small, out-of-the-way villages. The "Traveller's Welcome" surely wouldn't go back on so conspicuous a promise? Yet the house was locked and nobody was at home, and so the next likely place, the "Greyhound," was tried. But that was also closed and lifeless. Then the third and last hope was ventured, "The Fleur de Lis." But that likewise was barricaded and deserted, and so for the time being we had to bid adieu to East Hagbourne, and following the advice of a native, make for a very different haven of rest, a modern hotel at Didcot Junction. Still, we must admit that so far as railway junctions go, the locality might have been very much worse, and during the silent intervals between the dashing of an express and the drawn-out bumping of luggage-train shunting, it was even possible to delude oneself into the belief that a railway station, much less a junction, was anywhere near, for the parklike grounds at the back, and an ample shrubbery in front, did their utmost to counteract the stern reality. The environment a little further afield was by no means so sylvan, but fortunately the following morning

a kindly veil of mist softened and modified very pronounced evidences of the hackneyed and unimaginative suburban villa. But ere long unsightly things were left behind, and the tall hedgerows and ample orchards again were in evidence, and in these deep lanes things looked again as if belonging to another age, when railways and jerry-builders were undreamed of.

And now with leisure to look around there is ample to be seen. At the cross roads by the inn where first we had made application for a bed, stands the stunted shaft of a roadside cross, for with another by the old farmhouse of Coscote, and the fine specimen previously mentioned in the centre of the village, East Hagbourne is well provided in this way, maybe because the Manor once belonged to the Monastery of Cirencester. Continuing our way, a tumble-down old farm in the most picturesque state of decay presents itself to view, a subject that no artist would be able to pass without pausing to make a sketch. It has reached that crippled stage when the inevitable must soon happen—restoration or demolition.

Proceeding further, again we are in the heart of the village; not so beautiful *quite*, on account of the grey morning mist, in place of the soft, genial sunshine of the previous evening. Yet

notwithstanding the mist, the colouring is still rich and warm, red brick and red tiling being the prevailing note of the buildings excepting the grey old church, which is seen in the background from this side by the village cross. An old house, which once was a butcher's shop, has on the lawn in front clipped yews, cone-shaped, like the wooden toy trees of our youth. The rooms, low-ceilinged, with beams across, have soft, mellow-tinted Moreland prints and old-fashioned furniture to add to their comfort, and at the back a sweet little garden, with luxuriant syringa archway leading to a rippling stream that skirts the meadow beyond.

At the Dissolution, when Sir Francis Knolles received a grant of the Manor, the several crosses in the village were decapitated, so that now we see on the top of the principal one a cubal sundial in place of the original summit. The stonework of the shaft, though much worn by the stress of years, shows the sculptuary of niches and a canopy above. The Manor Farm, not far away, has a moat where arises a spring which is reputed to have never run dry. Its name, "Hacca's brook," of Saxon origin, varying from "Broc" to "Burn" by Domesday (which now implies a decent lapse of time) had settled into "Hacheborne," so the "Hache" to "Hag" in so many

more centuries was a comparatively easy corruption.

The architectural interest of the church is quite in keeping with this old-world village; indeed, there are peculiarities of detail which are quite unique. For example, the Perpendicular tower above whose battlements arises on the summit of the roof an exquisite little fifteenth century bell-cot, with crocketed pinnacles at the corners and an extinguisher roof capped by ornamental finial. To add to the charm of outline, an octangular stair-turret, with pyramidal roof and boldly moulded cornice, flanks one of the tower angles. This latter is said to have once served the purpose of a beacon as a guidance to lost pedestrians on the downs; however, there is nothing now to show a likely receptacle for combustibles. Of the Perpendicular period, also, is the finely proportioned east window. The entrance porch is spanned by a very wide arch of oak, with carved spandrils, altogether very suggestive of the spacious porch of Ockwells in this county. The original nail-studded door, the nails curiously clinched, will repay examination. Its handles are engraved, and their worn-down sockets speak of the wear of centuries. The bolt of the south door also is a lesson in the old days of defence: a swinging bar of no mean proportions, which fits

to a nicety the sockets in the masonry. The nave, south aisle, and chancel roofs also display late Perpendicular work in the bosses, pendants, and tracery. A pillared pulpit arises from a slender stem, which gracefully branches out, with the oddest little staircase perched on legs leading up to it. The three piscinæ are interesting; that in the north aisle has a projecting bowl or drain, and sculptured arch; that to the south, a traceried canopy rather uncommon in shape. The plainest of the three is in the chancel in the usual place, the south side of the altar. There is also a "squint" and the original stairway up to the Rood-loft, but remains only of the lower part of the screen. The parclose screen has gone, and the exposed incisions at the base of the fine stone pillars are rather a blemish to their symmetry. A mural brass in the chancel has engraved figures of Hugh and Christian Keate, who, it is stated, had "be tweene them foure sones and fower daughs," their names following. The father died in 1613, the mother in 1627. The figures of the children kneel behind their parents, and the Keate arms are above. The father, however, was not buried here, but at West Ilsley, about six miles away, where at Hodcott House the Keates resided. There are some earlier brass memorials in the north aisle to the York family, and here

also is a large painting of the Royal arms. Beneath the belfry is a faded old master of King David in crown and ermine robes singing to the accompaniment of his harp.

At East Hagbourne the Cromwellian, General Essex, made a halt upon his advance to Abingdon in May, 1644. That feeble surrender of the town without a blow was one of many Royalist blunders. Had Rupert only been in command, he would undoubtedly have sallied forth to weaken Essex's forces. But even the King's wishes were not consulted when the troops were drawn away towards Oxford, a mistake attributed to Lord Wilmot's carelessness. The move suited Essex's plans to the letter; he calmly took possession of the town, and Waller at his back pushed on to Wantage, putting the Parliamentarians in full possession of the county. Sir Henry, the grandson of Sir Francis Knolles before-mentioned, was a delinquent, and possibly it was he who looked after the comforts of the Cromwellian General on May 24th.

It would be a pity before going further eastward, not to dip towards the downs a couple of miles southward to Blewbury, so we will cross the mill brook, and follow the course of the stream, which runs nearly level with the road. For motor travellers the détour means a moment's envelop-

ment in steam, for the water crossing the road is a little deep, and is best taken at a charge. The unavoidable plunge affords welcome relaxation to the monotonous boredom of Sunday afternoons at Hagbourne. At least, that was the impression conveyed by the youthful group assembled by the water splash. The simmering animosity against the modern mode of travelling which is openly expressed by the horsey persuasion in general, when opportunity serves a "breakdown," finds vent with vindictive force. The hard-hit hotel coachman, justifiably perhaps, rejoices at the stranded motorist. One of them, at least, unblushingly told us on one occasion, when he came upon a party of tourists at a standstill in the middle of a road-stream crossing, how he had encouragingly told the victims to "stop there and be"——blessed. And a word here in the defence of the much-abused petrol fiend may be excused. With the complications of town traffic we are not dealing, saving that coal and milk carts appear to enjoy a special privilege of defying the ordinary rules of the road. On the country roads the danger in nine cases out of ten arises when some lumbering vehicle going in the same direction has to be passed. That derelict is invariably travelling on *the wrong side*, and this creates all the trouble, for a vehicle coming in

PORCH, LONG WITTENHAM

EAST HAGBOURNE

the opposite direction, so far hidden from view, takes the narrow passage that the motor is forced to take, and then——! If strict rules were made that slow travelling vehicles *must keep to their proper side upon all occasions excepting where forced to pass another conveyance*, there would be far fewer calamities reported. The well-known van-driver taking his forty winks utterly regardless of everything is an additional terror, known to everyone other than a pedestrian, and yet these peaceful slumberers somehow manage to make their journey from start to finish without even an official reprimand!

But motoring concerns are as obnoxious to the anti-carman as golf talk is to the ignoramus in that engrossing pastime, so to return to the vicinity of Blewbury. Here again the country is more open. The assortment of wild flowers bordering the road is as happy as can be, summer, of course, taken for granted. The invigorating and unopposed breeze from the downs must bear an extra exhilarating charge of ozone, for the gay poppies, marguerites, and corn-flowers are dancing with the very joy of living! It little matters to them whether or no their beauty is wasted "on the desert air."

CHAPTER IX

FROM BERKS INTO SOUTHERN OXFORDSHIRE

THE main street of Blewbury is relieved by the varied angles of one or two good seventeenth-century houses, which, though restored and embellished with paint, nevertheless retain their characteristic features. The large and interesting cruciform church stands *vis-à-vis* with a Queen Anne charity school of red brick, with cherubims supporting the hooded doorway. The south entrance of the church is guarded by a brave old door retaining the original ironwork and formidable wooden lock. The little door leading to the Rood-loft also is original and intact, a beautiful specimen of Perpendicular tracery. The stairway and the archway above are also perfect, and, what is more remarkable, a piscina is up here which has been chiselled out of a Norman capital.

The Rood stairway and squint (for why give it the un-English name of Hagioscope?) on either

side of the chancel are in the thickness of the massive piers which once supported an original central tower, the squint on the right being more decorative and later than the one opposite. Upon one of the huge piers is fixed the brass effigy of a lady of Henry VII.'s time, wearing an elaborate head-dress with lappets falling nearly to the waist, a figure more slender and graceful than the female effigies of the period are wont to be. She is one of the wives of a knight in plate armour, who with a duplicate spouse occupies a more favoured position in the chancel. The estrangement is unquestionable. The likeness is so striking in expression, attitude, and the detail of garments that these ladies must certainly have been twins. But why is it that one of them has had to go to the wall so far away? The supposition will naturally arise that the second alliance was with the deceased wife's sister, and she would therefore be set aside. Anyway, there were three children by the double marriage, whose effigies side with the father. These people are Lattons of Upton (a secluded little hamlet of thatched and timbered cottages between here and West Hagbourne), where the family had been located since the reign of Edward II., before which time they belonged to Latton, a Wiltshire village previously mentioned. At one time

in Berkshire alone the family possessed no fewer than twenty-six manors, a record nearly as good as the Hungerfords. In the chancel also are brass effigies of later representatives of Henry VIII.'s day: a couple and fifteen children. But John Latton, like his predecessor Thomas, on the face of it—that is to say, the indented outline in the stone slab—has also had a misunderstanding, for his second wife by all appearances has stepped out of the church and taken some of the children to bear her company.

By this time the Lattons had taken up residence at Chilton Manor, about three miles to the west of Blewbury, of which more anon. The brass of John's sister, Alice, and that of her husband and children, are to be found on an altar tomb in the south chapel. Her husband, Sir John Daunce, is in full armour, and his dame is more like the familiar queen in the pack of cards than anything else. The five sons and two daughters of this couple are like their parents, vacuous in expression, and yet Sir John had his wits about him, otherwise he would not have accompanied his Royal sire to France in 1513, for Henry, like Mr. F.'s aunt in *Little Dorrit*, "hated a fool." The knight won his spurs in the battle so named. This Daunce further had the distinction of being an M.P. as well as "General Surveyor of the

Crown Lands," an official combination which would well be suited to the taste of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, especially at a time of wholesale distribution of monastic property.

At Winchendon Priory, to the west of Aylesbury, may still be seen Sir John's name carved over an old oak doorway. That Buckinghamshire estate was one of his many perquisities, and the knight rebuilt a portion of the ancient building according to his own taste.

The eldest of the five sons depicted in brass upon the Blewbury tomb married a daughter of Sir Thomas More. This tomb was originally in the chancel, and in the latter part of the seventeenth century some chained books, still existing in the church, were so fastened to it. In the north aisle, as at East Hagbourne, a painted representation of the Royal arms hangs upon the wall.

Among the long list of past vicars was John Balam, a contemporary with the first-named Latton. His effigy in robes, with supplicating hands, reclines beneath the chancel arch. A later vicar named Acres might well be likened to the animal associated with his predecessor's namesake for being so foolish as to get up in the pulpit to run down Good Queen Anne shortly after her august Majesty's decease. It is, however, satisfactory to know that his discourse, like that of

worthy Master Holdenough in *Woodstock*, was not to the liking of his congregation, and he was hauled down as unceremoniously.

And *àpropos* of Woodstock, not necessarily the novel, while we think of it, some new light is always cropping up wantonly to destroy the romance of rural England. Fair Rosamond's dual choice of a premature exit long since has been set aside as fiction, the poisoning of Rosamunda, Queen of Lombardy, six centuries earlier, having got mixed in traditional ballads. With it, of course, the clue-giving trail of silken thread is wafted to the winds, and now some would argue that she did not die at Godstow repenting of her sins, but at her parents' house bemoaning her dismissal! But notwithstanding ruthless attempts to uproot the romance, and if nothing is left of the famous labyrinth bower, the spring always known as "Rosamond's Well" in Blenheim Park survives to resuscitate the fascinating love-story. Moreover, diligent Hearne recorded nearly two centuries ago what he saw and heard when he went to inspect "the old ruins about Rosamond's Well —the labyrinth for Rosamond. This labyrinth," he says, "was a vast thing. It joyned with the palace. The workmen say that the old palace and the ruins of the labyrinth exceed the foundations of the present Blenheim House." The tunnel

from the Royal residence is said to have travelled beneath the old park wall, and "Rosamond's Chamber" is mentioned in a document penned less than a century after her death, stating that the workmen of the thirteenth century were provided with lead, marble, and crystal plates to put it in order. But enough of this by-passage concerning Woodstock, for which a former rector of Blewbury is responsible.

The oldest of the chime of eight bells in Blewbury church tower was cast two years before the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and one still nightly rings from Lady Day to Michaelmas, not to cover fire, but for the guidance of people who may be lost among the southern hills.

Chilton Manor, otherwise known as Latton's Place, where that family removed to from Upton in the early part of the sixteenth century, remains in part to tell a sad history of degeneration. Some thirty years ago this interesting old house, surrounding three sides of a courtyard, possessed oak wainscoted rooms, upon which, as well as some heraldic glass, appeared the Latton shield of arms. Gradually the old place fell into decay, and then the modern Mephisto in the shape of the antique dealer stepped in and held forth some ready money to pay for repairs, and in consequence all the old oak fittings, including a fine "shovel-

board" table, were carted off. Then came the natural sequel. The most dilapidated wing was pulled down and the remainder of the house completely modernised. The sojourn of the Lattons had been but brief. Not half a century after their settlement, they removed to the, now rebuilt, Manor of Kingston Bagpuize, about twelve miles to the north-west, and here this restless family remained until Charles the Second's reign, when they migrated to Esher, maybe to the historic palace of Wolsey association, for in the seventeenth century it had sundry tenants. John, the last tenant of Kingston Bagpuize, married Laetitia Pye, the daughter of the delinquent owner of Faringdon House before mentioned.

At the Astons, two closely adjoining villages a little to the east of Blewbury, we are again in the midst of orchards. Upon the way to Aston Tirrold, where wild flowers grow in profusion to cheer the traveller on the road, a strange-looking hill is passed, upon which a series of terraces have been cut at some remote age. It is called "Blewburton," and a somewhat similar eminence near to Aston Upthorpe is called "King's Standing," the latter preserving a tradition of a victory won by Alfred the Great. Ancient coins and weapons of all descriptions are said to have been discovered hereabouts. The churches of both Astons possess

features of Norman and even earlier architecture, so the defeat of the Danes by the monarch of Wessex just alluded to must have been fresh in men's memory when these buildings were first set up. One doorway at the lower village church indeed claims to be Saxon. The church of the upper Aston, however, is of more general interest, a pretty little structure with spired wooden belfry, late Gothic porch and old bench-ends. The primitive wooden candelabrum hanging from the beams of the roof is a mode of illumination now but rarely met with. It is suggestive of the very depths of rural England, yet here we are only four miles from the town of Wallingford.

For its neighbour Aston Upthorpe Church has a gabled farmstead coated with a warm and pleasing tint of cement, and the tree-lined lane skirting a wide expanse of orchard combines to form a typically rustic English scene.

To the east, past Lollington Hill and an old moated farmhouse, and we reach Cholsey village, through which the Great Western main line passes, making a junction for sleepy Wallingford. The innovation of the iron horse no doubt was responsible for the demolition of a very remarkable Monastic Barn, an appendage to a manor granted by Henry I. to the Abbot of Reading. This

huge building was over three hundred feet in length and fifty in breadth, and the pillars supporting the roof were twelve feet in circumference. Things were done here altogether on a large scale, the farm of the Monastery before the suppression ranking among the finest in the land. The great State farms of Germany have this wholesale look of prosperity. The former Cholsey establishment recalls a flourishing farm of colossal proportions incorporated with the ruins of an ancient monastery situated on the banks of the river Weser. To the English eye unaccustomed to farming on so extensive a scale, the amount of beasts and the vast proportions of the buildings that accommodate them is a revelation in enterprise. It has been the fashion of late to take example from Germany in many things. Why not in this, now that farming in a private way is said to have such a disastrous prospect in view?

A previous religious establishment had been founded at Cholsey by Ethelred at the youthful age of eighteen as an atonement for his mother's unpleasant hospitality to his stepbrother at Corfe Castle. The Danes, however, made short work of the new building, and burnt down the church as well in the same "unready" one's reign. And remarkable to say, when the rebuilt church was being restored about forty years ago, some of the charred

stones of the earlier building were for the second time "brought to light." This later cruciform church contains several Norman features in its massive walls and doors and windows, and here also are some early brass inscriptions.

The road to Wallingford converges towards the Thames, running a mile or so to the east. But the gorgeous scenery that opens out between Moulsford and Goring, a little further north, is quite uninteresting in comparison, an ugly and obtrusive Lunatic Asylum, not to mention a very hideous railway bridge, coming as downright shocks after such ideal loveliness to those who may be pulling Oxford way.

The tourist who visits Wallingford in the hope of seeing on the western side of the town any vestiges of the famous Castle which figured so prominently in historical annals will be vastly disappointed. According to local picture-postcards, there appears to be a fragment left known as "Queen Matilda's Tower," but there also appears to be no way of getting a glimpse of it; indeed, so carefully is it guarded from observation that the gallant Royalist, Colonel Blagge himself, who kept out the Cromwellians for four months at a stretch, could not have defended it much better. The grounds are jealously guarded, so much so that if you wish to get from one side of the town

to the other you have to walk an interminable distance along a narrow passage with high-built walls on either side, and nothing save the sky above to relieve the bare monotony. It may be very nice for those within this grim and prison-like enclosure, but for others it is an eyesore to the town. The ruined tower, thickly overgrown with ivy, of the picture-postcard is charming enough to whet one's appetite; but then these highly-coloured postcards do not always tell the truth. For example, look at the Town Hall of Wallingford as it is and as it is represented in colour. In the latter the building has the picturesque advantage of red tiling, and looks far prettier than the melancholy slated roof of reality. Perhaps the professional colourist of such views never gets the chance of seeing the real thing, and thus, thrown upon his own resources, like a young aspirant dabbling with a paint-box, constructs an ideal after his own heart. However, the ordinary artist has the advantage over him, for in photography there is no leaving out objectionable lamp-posts or sky-scraping advertisement which may present themselves to view.

Well, putting Matilda's property aside, the building that now is called the Castle, judging by these same picture-postcards, is a far from beautiful erection, and therefore maybe it is as well that

it is shut away from sight. There are stories of subterranean passages still existing which led up to the original fortress from regions remote, and, having been defeated by that interminable wall, the thought occurred of looking for these secret entries to the forbidden precincts. Just then the picture of the present Castle was noticed in a stationer's shop, and that extinguished all ambition.

Why Matilda should have monopoly of the tower (it is really part of the chapel of St. Nicholas) is difficult to conjecture. There were many Royal Matildas during the disturbed events of the Norman period, but undoubtedly the most unsettled of the lot was the Lady Matilda, otherwise "the Empress Maud," daughter of Henry I., and mother of Henry II. It was this disturbing lady to Stephen's peace of mind who evaded that monarch's soldiers at Oxford by crossing the frozen river into Berkshire, and when she reached Wallingford and defended the fortress against the attacks of her Royal cousin, had it not been for her son arriving from France in the nick of time to tackle the besiegers, she would certainly have been starved to death. The Castle was much associated with the fortunes and misfortunes of the early Henrys and Edwards, and many of the amiable *tête-à-têtes* between

John and his imperious barons were held here. The youthful days of Edward I. also were associated with its dungeons, and the Queen of Henry VI., bereaved by the loss of her son and husband, as well as the Lancastrian crown, also was shut up here to brood over her many sorrows. Then Owen Tudor was a prisoner there, and after a spell of comparative rest the Civil War of the next century brought the necessity of patching the old walls up, for the fine position of the Castle made it a formidable stronghold to capture. After holding out for the Royalists, the prize at length fell into Fairfax's hands soon after Faringdon House had surrendered to him. The Colonel Blague, or Blagge (a member of the Suffolk family seated at Hornings-heath), who defended Wallingford Castle so bravely, five years later not only fought for the second Charles at Worcester, but accompanying him on the first stage of his memorable flight, was entrusted with the King's diamond George when the former donned his peasant disguise at Whiteladies. The Colonel lived just long enough to see Charles reinstated upon his throne, but his two handsome daughters were conspicuous figures at the new Court. To say the one was praised by Evelyn and the other by Count Gramont suffices to

particularise their opposite characteristics and temperament.

When Dutch William was advancing Londonwards upon his march from Abingdon, he and the Duke of Schomberg halted for a day at Wallingford, dining at the "Lamb" Inn, an hostelry still existing. Here a discussion was held as to the possibility of an attack by James's forces, and the General was despatched to reconnoitre the position of the ruined Castle, for it had been demolished by Cromwell's order. The keep, however, had been left fairly intact, and Schomberg, having examined its possibilities, reported to the Prince that he had never seen a better place for a defence, and that in twenty-four hours he could make it fit to stand a siege, and in three weeks he would guarantee to make it impregnable.

The trials of a tenant at the time of Civil War troubles are revealed by a petition to Charles II. by the gentleman who occupied the Castle when it was ordered to be garrisoned in 1641. The damage complained about was not done by the siege, but after the war, in 1652, when the Parliamentary soldiers, in pulling down the ancient walls, had paid but scant respect to the petitioner's gardens and orchards. Some of the earthworks and fortifications are said still to be visible.

A few of the old inns at Wallingford preserve their ancient features, and here and there in narrow streets and byways are carved gables and brackets, or a narrow oaken Gothic doorway leading up a beam-framed passage to a more roomy courtyard beyond. The market place, however, quite revels in space, though the before-mentioned Town Hall, supported by pillars, is backed by the old church in such a way as to have the effect of shutting off one-half of the town from the other. A circle of stones let into the roadway goes by the name of the Bull-ring, and evidently bull-baiting was a favourite amusement there in the "good" but cruel old days, when to give the poor worried beast spirit it was necessary first to prime him with a quart of strong ale! The stocks which stood hereabouts not many years ago have been removed somewhere within the Castle precincts. True enough that long since the instrument of correction had retired from an active life, but what can be its business on the other side of that frowning boundary wall? The crowns upon the pinnacles of the church tower are supposed to commemorate the Restoration. The Victorian restoration within the building is sufficiently triumphant to speak for itself.

From Wallingford we propose to follow more or less the course of the river, that is to say, after

we have been to Ewelme, which by "crow" measurement is a matter of only three miles to the north-east. Crossing the river, Crowmarsh Gifford is near at hand, a more important sounding place than it really is, for there is little else to see besides its tiny church, whose simple bell-cot possesses singularly sweet-toned bells. The doorways, round windows, piscina, and font all possess good Norman work, constructed about the time of the signing of the famous treaty of Stephen's reign. Shortly before, when that monarch was besieging Wallingford Castle, he erected a fort at Crowmarsh, which in turn was attacked by Prince Henry, then hastening to relieve the starving garrison. The meadow where the fortifications were thrown up still goes by the name of "the Barbican."

In the distance of a little over a mile and a half the main Henley and Oxford road is crossed, and at this point a lane opposite leads to Ewelme. This charming, hill-surrounded little village is so shut in that approaching it this way nothing is seen of it until you suddenly drop down on the top of it. The main part of the village lies in the valley, a small assembly of pretty rustic cottages and an inviting-looking old inn, which, with its setting of flowers and ferns, has quite a homely look. You enter, and facing you is

the staircase, guarded by a dog-gate of diagonal pattern. Some of the canine tribe so inclined would, of course, with little ceremony jump this barrier, but the maker of dog-gates was up to this ruse, and in some instances made the bar at the top revolve, so that when it was touched it upset the animal's equilibrium. This gate, however, is provided with no such ingenious device. An inviting little parlour tempts us to enter, and here are plenty of old-fashioned things quite in keeping with the dog-gate—a corner china-cupboard, containing "bits" to put the collector upon the alert. Then there are samplers, silk flowers, black profile portraits, candlesticks, and cream-jugs, all belonging to the past, yet not so remote —the grandfather period of "middle-aged" folk, allowing a pretty wide margin as to dates. Nor must the Chippendale furniture be overlooked.

The yard at the back contains some very ancient barns and outbuildings, all under the shadow of an enormous lime tree, from which dangles, of all things in the world, a great meat-safe, an excellent yet primitive-looking arrangement, which, even in this remote village, has to be securely padlocked. Indeed, as it seems, some of the old things in the parlour ought to be padlocked also, for mine hostess can relate of

motorists who have unceremoniously helped themselves to curios before making their departure!

Climbing up towards the church, a picturesque group of ancient buildings first comes in view. The nearest block has a quaint entrance porch projecting from the main gabled red-brick structure. There are heavy buttresses at the corners and two enormous chimney shafts, whose massiveness is relieved by several beautiful foliated Gothic mullioned windows. To compare the effect of the old narrow bricks with the present style is but to make one angry with our modern stereotyped methods of building. In restoring Tattershall Castle, the far more picturesque, ancient style of brick, long and narrow in shape, is being used, so their manufacture cannot be so difficult a matter. Yet even if the ancient form of brick were universally approved, how long would it take to stamp out the larger and recognised shape in use?

The time-worn, nail-studded door, standing ajar, invites one to climb a short flight of narrow stone steps to a room for educational and municipal purposes. The schoolroom proper is made cheerful and patriotic with British flags, and a glance around suffices to show how up-to-date and practical are the pictorial and model methods

of demonstration. This Grammar School and the adjacent almshouse have the distinction of having owned for foundress the granddaughter of the father of English poetry. Alice Chaucer had married for her third husband William de la Pole, fourth Earl and first Duke of Suffolk, who obtained Royal licence in Henry VI.'s reign for carrying out their charitable purpose. Of this distinguished couple we shall speak presently.

The quaint courtyard of the almshouse, otherwise St. John's Hospital, is entered by a brick battlemented archway, flanked by buttresses with blocked-in Early English trefoiled arch over the segmental pointed doorway.

An array of tall chimneys and gabled dormer windows adds to the general picturesque effect. But the cloistered courtyard is by far the most interesting feature of the building, and the vista obtained along these open corridors, made cheerful and bright by the rows of flowers between each oaken support, recalls in point of contrast the poor old "Biggin" at Hitchin. Above the centre of each lean-to roof arises a gabled timber-framed porch with open wooden mullions cusped at the apex like the stone windows of the schoolhouse. The carved tracery of the fifteenth century barge-boards above is full of rich detail. Over the deeper roof of the upper storey appears

the battlemented church tower, into which there is an entrance by a flight of steps. A flower bordering to the little grass plots soothes down the formality of the square, and so for that matter does a wheel-well which forms the centre point; yet notwithstanding its utility, and helpfulness in counteracting horizontal lines, one would like to see it replaced by something of more pleasing design, which so happily endowed an institution could well afford.

The gorgeous tomb of Alice, or Alicia, the foundress, and the lofty carved oak steeple-cover of the font, alone are worth a pilgrimage to Ewelme, for, for beauty of workmanship, nothing finer in their own particular way could be found in any part of England. The font, raised upon steps, is octagonal in design, its panels being richly sculptured with shields, quatre-foils, and tracery. The Tabernacle openwork of the cover is one of the most elaborate character of the Perpendicular, each tier of pillared arcading being surmounted by canopies with ornamental crockets and finials; and stage by stage diminishing in size, the elaboration of detail is maintained towards the summit by carved crockets alone. At the top of all is perched an odd little figure with folded wings, more like a mediæval freak than an angel, whom no doubt it is supposed to repre-

sent. Most of the detail in the church belongs to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The magnificent alabaster tomb of the much-married foundress (who died in 1475) is resplendent with colour and gilding, and, thanks to the many acres belonging to the endowment, it is guarded and otherwise well cared for. The effigy of the Duchess, with coronet upon her head, and with supplicating hands, reclines full-length beneath a canopy. Upon her left arm she wears the insignia of the Garter, so has the distinction of being one of the very few female effigies thus decorated. Upon the sides of the altar-tomb, beneath pinnacled canopies, are several small winged figures in fifteenth-century armour and pleated gowns, each of whom holds a shield bearing arms and quarterings; and beneath these rows of figures are as many traceried windows, through the apertures of which may be seen the shrouded and mummified form of the Duchess—a "cadaver," to use the correct term.

The square-shaped archway in the south aisle wall, beneath which the tomb stands, is also sumptuously decorated with panelled tracery, quatrefoils, and arms, above which runs a deep frieze and cornice supporting the demi-figures of winged monks and knights. This sculpture is intersected by gracefully moulded columns, above

whose capitals stand more saintly figures carved in oak.

One is naturally desirous to know why the Duke's effigy does not figure here. He was the unpopular statesman, unjustifiably maligned by Shakespeare, who after Cade's Rebellion, was banished, and in crossing the Channel for France, was waylaid by a mysterious vessel and kept on board for three days, when a sinister boat came alongside bringing a headsman with his block and axe—one of the many dark deeds put down to the long account of Richard Duke of Gloucester. Crookback, however, was more kindly disposed towards his victim's great-nephew, for at the death of his (Richard's) son, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, was named as the Plantagenet successor. This John's father, the acknowledged second Duke of Suffolk, had married Elizabeth, the sister of the two last Sovereigns of the House of York, and their second son (the Earl of Lincoln having been killed at Stoke in 1487), Edmund de la Pole inherited the dukedom, but renounced the title in favour of William, the son of the fourth Duke, which latter turned with the times and saved his head, while Edmund, his second cousin, retained the earldom only until the year 1513, when his extermination (one of the charitable dying wishes of Henry VII.) made a

vacancy in the succeeding reign for the King's brother-in-law, Charles Brandon, the Suffolk Duke, who was for ever receiving Royal emoluments. Meanwhile the de la Poles retired into Devonshire, where, at Shute House, descendants still reside.

The Duchess Alice was also related to the House of Lancaster, for her grandmother, Philippa Rouet, the poet's wife, was a sister of Catherine Swinford, *née* Rouet, the mistress and afterwards the third wife of John of Gaunt. In consequence the Duchess Alice's father, Thomas Chaucer, of Donington Castle and Woodstock Manor, besides Ewelme (which came to him through his wife Maud, daughter of Sir Thomas Burghersh), held the distinguished post of chief butler to Kings Richard II. and Henrys IV., V., and VI. He fought at Agincourt by the side of Michael, the third Earl de la Pole, his daughter's brother-in-law. The latter was killed in that famous fight, and his body is said to have been brought to Ewelme, a slab of Purbeck marble in the north aisle being pointed out as his place of interment.

Thomas Chaucer's tomb has effigies in brass of an armoured knight and his dame, with numerous shields of arms. There are also several brasses to the Vernons, Lees, Palmers, &c., and also one

to the Master of the Hospital when first it was built.

The Manor House has dwindled into a comparatively insignificant building, and anyone can see at a glance that its window sashes belong to a very much later time than the gable-ends or chimneys. It is the successor of a Royal moated palace, patronised, it is said, by good Queen Bess. At the time of the Civil War, Prince Rupert lodged in the house. The then lord of the Manor, Colonel Martyn (whose tomb is also in the church) kept the sacred edifice free from Puritan desecration, otherwise it is more than likely that that wonderful tomb and font would have been hacked to pieces merely out of wanton mischief.

CHAPTER X

THE BORDER OF OXON AND BERKS

At Benson, or Bensington, we come upon the Thames again, with Berkshire facing us on the opposite bank. The weir pool here is one of the most delightful spots on the river, and worthily popular with angler and artist. But the village is not a cheerful-looking place by any means, the huge red brick, half-empty and deserted buildings which line the curving road, hostelries that were busy enough in the good old coaching days, have a decidedly depressing and overpowering effect. Architecturally they are unlovely—big, rounded bays and windows innumerable (and some of them blocked up) unrelieved by any graceful lines. The signs with elaborate iron-work are the best features about them. Their glory is departed, never to return, for it is a fallacy to believe that motor traffic will ever revive their prosperity. When

consulted, mine host in almost any village ironically shakes his head. The car-man never comes to stop. Occasionally he takes a hurried meal, but more often than not he orders drinks to accompany the food he has on board, and often he hasn't even the decency to move away before he begins his *al fresco* meal. The motorist, as a rule, speeds through villages as fast as the regulation limit will allow, and makes for the towns.

A by-road to the left leads to the church. It consists of what is known as "mixed" styles, a term which allows any amount of latitude. The mixture here was re-arranged in 1780, when the tower was rebuilt, and in 1861, when the chancel likewise suffered. Barring the benches, the nave has come pretty well out of the ordeal: its arcades are Early English, and the capitals of the rounded pillars are boldly carved and varied in design. The dark oak roof is probably Early Tudor, and is supported by carved brackets. The cover to the plain tub-shaped font is original in design, possibly Jacobean, with open ribs and knobs and pendants. Monumental memorials are few. There is a brass to a worthy of James I.'s reign, one Stephen Smith, and a rather perplexing antithetical inscription on a mural tablet near the south entrance. It must be given verbatim that it may explain itself:—

M.S.

To the pious memory

of Ralph Quelche and Jane his wife

who slept / now sleepe } togeather in 1 { bed by y^e^ space of 40 yeares / grave till C^t^ shall awaken them

He / Shee } fell asleepe Añ Dñi { 1629 / 1619 } beinge aged { 63 / ? } yeares.

For y^e^ fruite of their { Labours / Bodies } they left { ye New Inn twice built at th^r^ chard / one only son and two daughters

Their son being liberally bred in y^e^ University of Oxon

Thought himselfe bound to erect this wall monument

of { their / his } piety towards { God / them }

An^o^ Dñi 16

From the above it will be seen at a glance that the epitaph is also in the "mixed" style, for which perhaps the "New Inn" alluded to is responsible. This, by the way, has not survived —at least, as an inn—as have "The Crown" and the "White Hart."

The modernised Manor of Fyfield, near Benson, at one time was an appendage of the famous Abbey of Abingdon. It was one of the many Manors possessed by Sir John Golafre, of Fyfield, in Berkshire (some twelve miles away), whose daughter became the wife of the before-mentioned John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, the last Yorkist claimant, who fought so desperately at the Battle of Stoke, and whose body was found on the field still grasping his sword, while the remains of his supporter, Lord Lovel, was not discovered until more than two centuries afterwards, concealed

between the stone walls of his castle at Minster Lovel.[1]

Dorchester, to the north-west, on the main Oxford highway, here as level as a die, is reached through a corner of Shillingford, a place only noteworthy for its bridge, which carries the Reading road across the river. A couple of miles further along, and the ground rises and falls gracefully over Dorchester Bridge, for here the Thame running from Buckinghamshire is spanned, and a few hundred yards away, joining hands with the Isis, becomes the old Thames proper. This approach to Dorchester is a delightful change after the monotonous level of the road. The river is thickly lined by pollard willows, and above the delicate green the grand old Abbey Church stands out to the best advantage, revealing all the beauty of its spacious length of nave. To call the old-fashioned street (for the by-roads amount to very little) a town is to give an entirely wrong impression of the place, for really it is only a very moderately sized village, with only a shop or two. But there are many antiquated inns, the principal of which, with many cosy gable-ends in the thoroughly old English style invariably copied on the stage, faces the church lich-gate.

Dorchester is one of those "decayed" towns

[1] *Vide, Secret Chambers and Hiding-Places.*

which offer innumerable sketchable bits. It is said to have been decaying since the twelfth century or thereabouts, when the main thoroughfare to London was so ill-advised as to be led astray. Yet the "town" appears to be far removed from the final stage of dilapidation. On the other hand, instead of being crushed by the knowledge of its lingering malady, like a very aged but active-minded person, it does what it can to keep level with the times. Had "Dorcic" steadily progressed since it was a cathedral city in the seventh century, one dreads to think of the awful sort of place it might have been to-day!

People upon whom a decayed town or city has a depressing effect—and we have met many so constituted—would probably be more depressed in visiting such a place had it flourished. With so ancient a pedigree time is nothing; a skip of five centuries or more at the outset, therefore, may be overlooked, that we may reach the period of the building of the Abbey. Nor by that time has the turning-point of the down-hill tendency been reached. But if the town declined after the Norman period, when the See removed to Lincoln, the Abbey Church certainly did not. Its varying styles of architecture, approaching the very finest and purest Gothic step by step, shows nothing of debasement or deterioration. The cul-

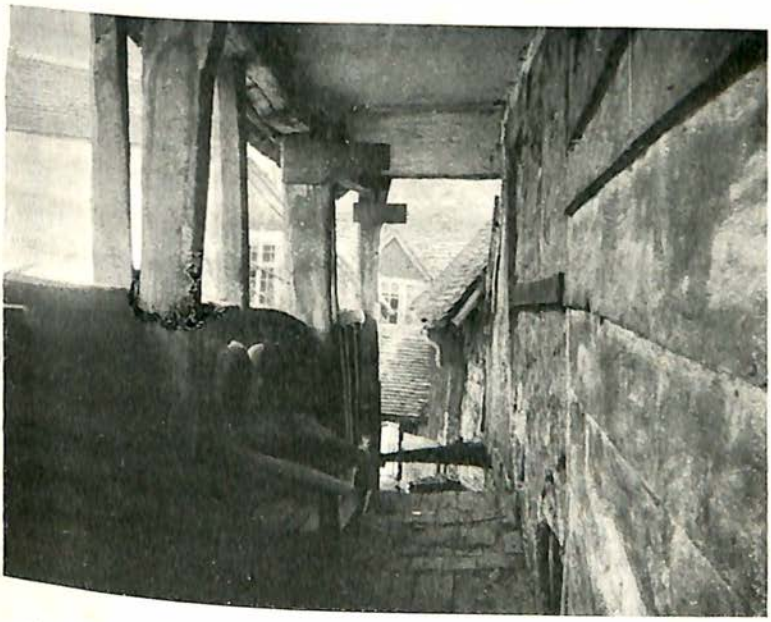
minating point may be said to have been reached when the finely proportioned Tudor porch was erected. Soon afterwards came the universal check of the Dissolution, and after a lapse of twenty years' private enterprise reclaimed what was possible and presented the building to the parish. Then followed some extensive demolition, and the rebuilding of the tower in the beginning of the seventeenth century.

At the south-west angle a picturesque group is formed by a richly canopied buttress of the Decorated period, and the ample porch with open wooden screenwork of late Elizabethan date, close to which a tall "preaching cross" raises its graceful tabernacled head. Facing this group are the remains of the "Guest House," or Priory of Black Canons, founded in the twelfth century. At the Dissolution it was granted to Sir Edmund Ashfield of Ewelme, and in Cromwell's time it was converted into a Grammar School. It is a nondescript building, half barn, with timber framing and blocked-up Early English windows. Nearer to the street stands a ponderous oaken lich-gate, whose huge beams form capacious and graceful arches. Perhaps it will be as well not to inquire too closely into the age of this lich-gate; it is finely proportioned, and very massive and decidedly picturesque, which cannot be said of many

modern lich-gates, the designers of some of which might do worse than take their pattern here. A story is recalled that was related at a recent Church Congress. One of these "corpse-gates" had been newly done up with ample coatings of paint and varnish. The inscription overhead, "This is the Gate of Heaven," had never before appeared so conspicuous. Yet the thoughtless workmen, in blissful ignorance of the consequences, had left a notice-board standing on the ground instructing in plainer letters still to "Go round the other way"!

The piled-up gables opposite the church tempt one more than any notice-board or sign to approach the wide arch which leads into the court-yard of "The George," and here is a picture to delight the eye: a huge oak-framed gallery runs along one side, having the original steep steps, and a rough and rugged corridor leading to narrow arched Gothic doorways. Compare this inn-yard with the more famous ones in some of our towns and cities. Many of the latter have been tampered with and utterly spoiled, whereas this one, if more battered and weather-worn, is exactly as it was in the time of the Tudors. The interior of "The George" is rambling and capacious, and an old dog-gate guards the massive staircase. The buxom, hospitable landlady,

Almshouse, Ewelme



"The George," Dorchester

too, is just the type which used to welcome the jolted, weary, and hungry traveller of the stage-coach—that sort of cheery personality that one hopes to encounter in an ancient hostelry of this kind, but, alas! so rarely finds. There are several other ancient inns with pointed gable-ends, great chimney-stacks and overhanging storeys. Some of them have retired from public life, but others still lead an active existence.

There have been laments at the havoc wrought within the fine old Abbey Church, but if the ancient benches have disappeared and other changes have been effected in Victorian times, there is very much left to be grateful for. As Fairford in Gloucestershire is famous for its unequalled painted glass, so is Dorchester in Oxfordshire remarkable for its curious Jesse window, whose quaintly curving stone transoms and tracery form the branches of the genealogical tree. The stem springing from the patriarch's loins represents the central mullion. The sculptured figures of the "House of David" stand out boldly one above the other, and they are supplemented by a series of broad-shouldered, stunted, dwarfish figures depicted in the ancient glass. The colouring of these latter is subdued, and they stand out well from the surrounding plain glazing. But for charming effect of colour one must turn

to the superb east window, whose tracery sculpture, of the time of Edward III., represents scenes from the New Testament. The lines of the late Decorated period are exceptionally beautiful, and the colouring, although all the glass is not old, most harmonious and effective. There is not here the heavy, oppressive, overloaded effect so often in evidence in church windows. The delicate tints seem to blend without effort, with lightest and happiest result. Here are shown passages in the life of the prelate, St. Birinus, of the seventh century, whose bones now rest in Winchester Cathedral. A third fine Perpendicular window, opposite the Jesse window, also contains sculptured figures upon the stonework and shields of arms in ancient glass. The sedilia beneath, with double piscina attached, have elaborately wrought canopies, and another double piscina with tall pinnacles is in the wall nearer to the altar rails.

The monuments are assembled in the chapel to the south. Many of the stone slabs in the floor, alas! are shorn of their brasses, but there is a very characteristic knight in Gothic plate-armour, with sword and dagger, his head upon a crested heaulme. His lower limbs are unfortunately missing. It represents Sir John Drayton, of Henry IV.'s reign. Sir Richard

Bewefforeste, an abbot with cope and pastoral staff, who died in the early part of the sixteenth century, is the only complete brass effigy. An alabaster figure of Gilbert Lord Segrave reclines upon a richly carved and buttressed altar tomb. His bassanet, gorget of chain-mail, and pointed sollerets are typical of Richard II.'s time. Upon another altar tomb near at hand a Crusader in chain and surcoat is far less reposeful. Some indignity has made this poor knight (Sir J. Holcombe, who died about 1280, it is supposed) turn on his grave. His legs are twisted far more than a cross-legged Crusader is wont to twist, and thereby the unfortunate lion who acts as footstool is severely incommoded, judging at least by the poor beast's unhappy expression. The face of the knight is, if anything, less amiable as he snatches savagely at his sword-hilt. But an explanation of this bitter wrath is near at hand: the charwomen have raided these precincts. Whether the effigies have endured the full tortures of a "spring-clean" cannot be said, but there are strong evidences of it, for a swabbing-cloth still rests upon the forehead of a full-blown Justice of the Common Pleas who flourished in the fourteenth century! This John de Stonore, in legal robes, also rests upon an altar tomb full length. In this part of the

church also reclines the effigy of a fourteenth-century mitred bishop.

There are many other things to be seen: mural painting, stone coffins (one of them when opened contained a mummified form wrapped in gilded leather), some coloured vaulting of the shrine of St. Birinus (having bosses representing the heads of lions and Crusaders), and a vast collection of odd bits of stone sculptuary. The projecting base of a niche attached to a fluted column dividing off the south chapel has upon it figures in priestly garb and a monkey blowing a huge horn. In the floor near by is a slab to "An artless beauty"—whose nerves being "too delicately spun"—"died a martyr unto excessive sensibility." This was in 1799, so even more than a century ago people not only were blessed with nerves, but died of them. The circular leaden font adorned with seated figures of the Apostles (minus Judas) has been supposed by some to date from a very early period much anterior to the reconstruction by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, in 1140, but in all likelihood is even later than that date. The leaden font at Walton Church, in Surrey, with similar seated saints, is Norman, and one at Warborough (close to Dorchester), with figures of mitred abbots bestowing benediction, is attributed to the thirteenth century.

The little Berkshire villages of Long and Little Wittenham are close at hand, but on the other side of the river. For pedestrians to reach the latter the distance is but the matter of a mile, but the journey by road is circuitous in the extreme, for either the bridge of Shillingford or that of Clifton Hampden has to be crossed, the one to the south-east, the other to the north-west. If unencumbered with a vehicle other than a bicycle, the former is by far the best, for just hereabouts, where the Thames and Thame unite, the rustic scenery backed by the Wittenham woods and the Sinodun hills is just the very spot for dawdling an hour or so, the lazy example having been set by Chaucer, who is said to have been fond of wandering hereabouts in search of inspiration. An authority on rural Berkshire not so long ago suggested that Little Wittenham would be improved by the proximity of some residential mansion,—some newly-constructed building! To the person who lived there the spot might be a happy selection, but how about the rest of humanity? The rural charm which is the attraction would be immediately obliterated. It is like a railway proclaiming the unspoiled country in some spot where it has started a new station, and where within a year rows of hideous, staring red brick begin to spring up like mushrooms. Soon

enough the poor old river will be a procession of bricks and mortar from Richmond all the way to Oxford.

Little Wittenham consists of about half a dozen houses, including the Rectory and school. The old Manor House of the once-important family of Dunch was pulled down over a century ago. Their mortuary chapel, a separate building from the church, lingered on for another seventy years or so, by which time it had become sadly in need of repair, but as funds were not forthcoming from Dunch descendants, the old building was demolished and some of the monuments destroyed. Others have, however, assembled at the base of the church tower—a curious tower, by the way, more military than ecclesiastical in appearance. In a previous chapter it has been stated that the last male representative of Dunch, who died in 1719, was the son-in-law of Arabella Godfrey, *née* Churchill. This once mistress of James II. lived into George II.'s reign, and was an interesting link with the merry Court of Charles II. An earlier Edmund Dunch was the nephew of both Hampden and Cromwell, but his Baronage by the Protector naturally was ignored at the Restoration.

There are effigies in alabaster to this Edmund's father, Sir William Dunch (who was the son of an Edmund of Tudor times), and of Walter, be-

longing to Elizabeth's era. The latter's sons and daughters, and unclassified babes as well, are here to be seen, some of them looking more than usually stiff in their abnormally high collars. One of James I.'s feeble personal jokes was cracked at the expense of a Dunch of his reign who was not remarkable for his wit or learning. Asking and being informed his name, Jamie spluttered out: "Aye, aye, Dunch by name and dunce by nature."

William, a predecessor of those represented in effigy beneath the tower of Little Wittenham Church, had for his father-in-law the "gentleman porter of the Towne and Castle of Guysnes in ffraunce"—meaning Guines, near to which was the famous "Field of the Cloth of Gold";—or Guise, where the castle still hangs above the town. But after holding so exalted a position it was a bit of a come-down to be buried here in so remote a village; and without his official calling, plain John Barnes and his sister Mary would have been handed down to posterity as very ordinary individuals.

Those who seek more tombs of the Dunchs have but to follow the north-eastern course of the Thame as far as Newington, in Oxfordshire (a little over three miles away as the crow flies). There, are buried Walters and Henrys of the

seventeenth century with the arms of Dunch impaling Hungerford. To one of them, "the prop and glory of his race," is a lengthy laudatory epitaph by the poet Waller.

Besides the Dunch memorials and a few brasses there is little else to note at Little Wittenham Church. A water-colour sketch in the vestry shows what the interior was like before the alterations of 1862, and it is needless to say the usual remark about comparisons. Long Wittenham Church has survived the ordeal far better, for here there are ancient stalls, bench-ends, pulpit, Jacobean screen, and a circular leaden font with carved oak cover, the saintly figures this time standing beneath pointed arches. The piscina in the south chapel is a delicate piece of sculptuary, the canopy being adorned with angels. Just below it lies a diminutive figure of a cross-legged Crusader. One of the most picturesque features of the church, however, is its heavily timbered porch, whose gable is ornamented with finely carved barge-boards, and the open balustrades at the sides add the finishing touch to an entirely unspoiled specimen, a thing now but rarely met with. Nor are its fine proportions cramped for room, as is also so often the case.

At the further end of the village, mounted upon three steps, is a handsome roadside cross, which

the village has a belief, quite unsubstantiated, that it belongs to Saxon times. The Grecian form of cross upon the summit is surrounded by a circle after the fashion of the Runic crosses of Cornwall, but this part of it is Victorian, and the rest probably not older than the thirteenth century. The surroundings of this lofty cross are all that could be wished. It has ample breathing space, and just near enough to give effectiveness to the picture is a group of charming old thatched cottages. On either side of the long straight street the roofs are mostly of thatch. The cemented walls have just that pleasing touch of warmth, a blending of yellow and pink, that harmonises so well with straw thatching. The shadows cast by the vivid summer sunlight upon the dusty roadway present themselves by the laws of juxtaposition a luminous purple, and the faded blue-green and green-blue of cottage doors and window frames and shutters are welcome notes of colour, such as no artificial arrangement could ever succeed in obtaining. And again, the golden lichen and the gay festoons of scarlet roses set forth another scale of harmonies like the modulations of a musical note. Without the joyous sunshine half the fascinating charm is gone, though Long Wittenham under any weather conditions is one of the Thames villages that is essentially

an artist's model. The Wittenhams being just midway between the towns of Abingdon and Wallingford, the famous "Wittenham Clump" is a well-known landmark for those who follow the winding course of the sleepy, pollarded river.

Keeping to the north, the Thames is shortly crossed at Clifton Hampden, which in the old days of the ferry looked as pretty and rustic as many of the other villages hereabouts; but wealth has wrought sweeping changes within the last half century or so, for in place of the ferry is now a very substantial bridge, and the once plain, unpretentious rustic church has been so completely transformed that classed among modern buildings it will hold its own for many miles around. One thing, however, remains at Clifton to take us back to the old days of its "simple life." Its little "Barleymow Inn," of timber and thatch, fortunately remains in its pristine state—a remarkable thing; but then it stands away on the Berkshire side of the river, which probably accounts for it not having adapted itself to the times.

People have quarrelled with the Great Western Railway for a semi-boycot of Abingdon and Wallingford, and for branching northward from Didcot instead of Steventon. But with more direct communication would these dreamy old

places possess their present charm? The very idea of a junction at Steventon is too dreadful to contemplate. The necessity of two ugly bridges crossing the river a couple of miles both to the south-west and north-west of Clifton Hampden would certainly have been avoided; but then one can but think of the red brick, mushroom growths round Didcot Junction to be thankful that things remain as they are.

To the north of Clifton is Nuneham Courtenay, by road a distance of about two and a half miles, by the circuitous bend of the river quite nine; so as we have visited Sutton Courtenay as well as Abingdon upon a former occasion, we will now select the roadway, and leaving Coppice House upon the left, make for the boundary of the extensive park lands of the ancient Harcourts. To say that these sylvan glades met with the approval of the critical eye of the connoisseur, Horace Walpole, is to speak lavishly in their praise. "It is a park," he says, "in which are scenes worthy of the bold pencil of Rubens, or to be subjects for the tranquil sunshine of Claude de Lorraine." The fastidious Horace, perhaps, was comparing in his mind his recollection of the glorious view obtained from the higher ground with Rubens' masterly rendering of a distant landscape. The virtuoso of Strawberry Hill,

assisted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, compiled the catalogue of the famous picture collection here, and therefore there was ample opportunity for digesting both the natural and artificial scenery, dubbed by Nathaniel Hawthorne to be "as perfect as anything can be."

Approached by the level road, nobody would imagine the high situation of the house. The riverside gives an entirely different impression, but enthusiastic as one may be about the surroundings, the heavy-looking mansion cannot be said to be beautiful. Far more interesting is an ornate stone structure known as "Old Carfax," which was removed into this woody retreat from a busy part of Oxford in 1787. This curious old water conduit, according to a view of Oxford High Street taken some sixty years earlier, greatly enhanced the quaint appearance of the highways that met at this point; but, like old Temple Bar, the conduit got sadly in the way, and nobody much regretted its removal, much less troubled their heads about its reconstruction. It had had its day, nearly a couple of centuries, and upon occasional days of festivity had bestowed wine lavishly. Had "Old Carfax" continued in that mood of reckless liberality, maybe the Oxford City folk would not have let it go without a struggle; but coming down in the world, and ruin

staring it in the face, naturally nobody had a good word to say in its favour excepting the Harcourt lord who carted it off. In general shape, to make a clumsy comparison, this Renaissance structure may be likened to a small representation of a market cross, such as Malmesbury (which is not of Renaissance period, by the way), with the apertures filled in; but is four-sided instead of being octagonal, and in place of the pinnacles of the supports are lions and unicorns holding vanes. The octagonal turret above (in point of comparison representing the shaft of the cross) is elaborately sculptured with the figures in niches of great rulers, such as Alexander, Charlemagne, and Cæsar—including his heroic Majesty, James I.! And should his neighbours not quite come up to the last monarch's high level, the four virtues stand a stage below as if in testimony of his unquestioned equality.

At North Hincksey, a little to the west of Oxford, is another stone conduit, which supplied "Old Carfax" with water. Over the door is an Elizabethan coat of arms of Otho Nicholson (whose initials also appear on the Newnham conduit), the donor to the city of the ornamental fountain.

It may be scarcely necessary to state the Harcourts of old belonged to the more ancient Manor

of Stanton Harcourt. Only in Queen Anne's reign they migrated to Nuneham, and packed the village off to more distant quarters on the London road. Having satisfactorily disposed of the village, his lordship of the time dismantled the church, so as to erect something of his own design more in harmony with the house. Some Early English remains of the previous building are in the grounds of an estate at the eastern side of the Oxford road, and are a standing reproach to such vandalism. Ancient tombs were also scattered: a fine Elizabethan altar-tomb with effigies of Sir Anthony Pollard and his dame and children was treated with as little veneration, and went with the fragments of the church to Marsh Baldon —Harcourtian death-dues of the eighteenth century! The Pollards had succeeded the Courtenays, and they were followed by the Audleys and Wrights, and then Sir John Robinson bought it, the baronet created by Charles the Second, Lord Mayor and Lieutenant of the Tower, the "talking, bragging bufflehead" with whom Pepys occasionally dined and thought him fit for little else; but naturally the gossipy guest was "mightily pleased" with Lady Robinson. Sir John's daughter married an Earl of Wemys, who sold the estate of Nuneham in 1710 to Simon, first Lord Harcourt, the Lord Chancellor,

whose portrait hangs in Pembroke College, Oxford.

That city, by the way, we are rapidly approaching, where our rural ramblings come to an end. The river and the road now keep fairly level all the way to Oxford. The reconstructed Nuneham village has quite a charm of its own: the uniformity of its pretty little cottages of brick and timber, by no means modern, give it the most orderly and trim appearance, and the "Harcourt Arms" at the end gives the aristocratic finish. In a couple of miles the village of Sandford is reached, called Sandford-on-Thames to distinguish it from another hamlet so named to the north of Abingdon, and a village on the western side of Oxfordshire. The proximity of the city of towers may account for the many restorations to which Sandford Church has been subjected. Still, a few points of interest survive. We previously mentioned a sculptured scene from the New Testament, carved upon a slab of alabaster discovered at Drayton. Here in the chancel is another curious piece of ancient alabaster sculptuary: the Assumption—the Virgin in glory upheld by angels, and two of the latter supporting a reliquary at the base. It was buried for preservation and unearthed in 1724, and still shows signs of its original colouring and gilding.

When discovered, it was proposed to send it to the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, but the antiquary Hearne came to the rescue, and pleaded for its retention at Sandford. In the vicinity was a Benedictine Nunnery as well as a Preceptory of the Knights Templars and Hospitallers, and as both of these had chapels dedicated to the Virgin, the piece of carving is supposed to have originally come from one of them.

Upon the porch is the date 1652. It was the gift of Eliza Isham, and bears the inscription :—

"Thankes to thy charitie religiose dame
Wch found mee old and made mee new againe."

The Tudor style suggests an earlier date, and whatever the former porch was like, this one at least is now the prettiest part of the church, for the very plain Norman doorways are not beautiful. The old Jacobean Communion table disappeared with the Early Victorian "improvements."

The Powells, once people of importance at Sandford, died out a couple of centuries ago. The family originally was seated at Rolleston, in Staffordshire, and when they migrated here the religious establishment of the Knights Hospitallers, who had succeeded the Templars, was incorporated into a manorial residence.

A mural monument and some tablets in the chancel floor record the interment of Sir William and Sir John, both in the reign of Charles II., and Anna Betham, *née* Powell. Sir William was the brother, and Anna was the daughter, of Sir Edmund Powell, who died in 1656, aged eighty-three, and Anna (the latest Powell) died in 1692, aged eighty-six. Another branch of the family lived at the Manor of Forest Hill, a village a crow-fly distance of five miles to the north, which will be mentioned later.

The Powells were staunch Royalists, and when Charles the First, driven from his last refuge by the approach of General Fairfax, quitted Oxford at midnight on April 27th, 1646—undetermined whether to repair to the Scottish camp at Newark, or to appeal direct to the loyal citizens of London —he halted at Sandford Manor with the object of perfecting his disguise. His hurried exit from the slumbering city, accompanied by the faithful Dr. Hudson and the loyal Mr. Ashburnham, had not admitted of finishing touches to "Harry Watson," the pseudo-servant of the latter; but at the house of the old Cavalier at Sandford these little details were attended to, so that when the trio proceeded on their way to Dorchester and London, nobody could possibly suspect the King's identity. Of his Majesty's subsequent adventures

we have dealt with elsewhere,[1] so it but remains to mention the sequel to this nocturnal call.

The lapse of a couple of centuries had pretty well wiped out all Powell associations, and their old Manor House long since had degenerated into a farm. In 1846 or thereabouts, perhaps on the actual bicentenary of the Royal visit, during some alterations to the old building, a hiding-place beneath the floor-boards was discovered, and in it was a cobweb-covered Cavalier hat. A letter, too, was found in Charles's writing to a supporter in the north probably, to be delivered at some propitious moment that never arrived. The story of the discovery of the hat in its turn has been forgotten in the lapse of years, but in his wanderings that incomparable novelist word-painter, William Black, alighted upon the oral tradition, which he has casually woven into the thread of his *Strange Adventures of a Phaeton*, and in that form it is naturally passed as fiction. But what Count von Rosen recounted of the rambling tradition narrated at the Inn of Sandford-on-Thames—possibly "The King's Arms"—was in the main points true. The conclusion of the story as related by the novelist was intentionally "mixed" so as to mislead. The King's hat did not find its way eventually to the British

[1] *Vide, Memoirs of the Martyr King.*

MANOR FARM, SANDFORD

OLD HOUSE, EAST HAGBOURNE

Museum, but to a well-known reader in the Library in the 'seventies, one of the Sobieski Stuart brothers (enthusiastic collectors of Stuart relics), who claimed to be descendants of the Bonny Prince.[1]

Sandford Manor as it is to-day is a very prosperous-looking farm. It stands on the low ground below the church, and faces the river, and from the higher level is concealed from view by the many barns and outbuildings in its proximity. The house itself is a gabled Tudor building with stone mullioned windows and doorways; it has, however, been so much restored that it looks more like a new than an old house. But time and change have dealt more leniently with the ancient chapel of the Hospitallers, which after the Dissolution was granted to Edmund Powell, the father possibly of the Edmund before mentioned. It is detached, and now serves the purpose of a barn; the fine east window is blocked up, but the mullions and tracery are visible. A brave old door of Perpendicular date has not had the scars of age removed, and, together with the massive buttresses of the chapel, is far more pleasing than the new-looking masonry of the residence. Viewed from the inside, the chapel looks as sturdy as it does without, and the beams

[1] *Vide, The Real Captain Cleveland,* pp. 230–247.

show but little signs of their age. In the garden wall dividing off an orchard is a fine old Jacobean gateway, dated 1614, and a shield bearing the badge of the Templars, who originally removed here from Cowley (nearer to Oxford), where they were established by Stephen's Queen, or, by some accounts, the other Matilda "Empress" with whom she is so often confused. Other remains of ancient stonework form the borderings of flower beds, which, after all, is quite excusable, seeing it would be impossible to find the localities of their proper situations.

To follow up the Powell connection, we will skip the few miles intervening, and walk up the steep and winding lane leading to Forest Hill, where fortunately all ugly evidences of suburban Oxford have entirely disappeared. Along the main road by way of Headington Hill, after the surrender of the city, the Royalist army marched out on June 24th, 1646, but until you turn out of this eastward road there is nothing suggestive of olden times, for the usual squalid rows of hideous red brick have taken full possession of the district. Such, however, is not the case with Headington village, lying off to the left of the main road, a place once notorious for bull-baiting contests. A fine Perpendicular cross, with octagonal shaft and sculptured base, is in

the churchyard, and the church has some interesting Norman features and curious fresco paintings.

Having climbed to the little bell-turreted church of Forest Hill, one may look around from the old churchyard lined with yews. It forms a kind of terrace supported by steep walls, and commands a delightful view of the undulating meadows and hills and woods beyond. Nearer at hand a steep-roofed, thatched cottage adds the touch of homeliness. Steps lead down into an orchard, and looking over the low wall, a very fine Jacobean doorway, surmounted by a great angular knob on the top, forms the centre of the boundary wall of the adjacent Manor farm where lived the Powells. The house has been rebuilt, but that old garden gateway belonged to it, and some of the capacious barns near by formed part of the outbuildings.

The Powells here and at Sandford, being staunch Royalists, suffered severely at the time of the Civil War, and when in straitened circumstances Milton held out a helping hand. In the baptism register of this old church is an entry recording the poet's marriage on January 28th, 1625, with Mary Powell. Richard, her father, had borrowed a large sum of money from Milton's father, the scrivener of Bread Street, London, whose ancestors came originally from this part of

Oxfordshire (Stanton St. John, to the north-west of Forest Hill). History does not relate that he gave his daughter as security, but in 1643, when the junior Milton had attained the mature age of thirty-five, he claimed her as his wife, and is said to have been united to her in this church. But Mary Powell did not take kindly either to London or to Puritanical rigidities, and so within a month she left her literary husband in the lurch and returned again to the parental roof at Forest Hill. Poetic inspiration, one would have thought, would have flowed even easier from this rural retreat than from dingy London, judging, at least, from passages in *L'Allegro*, which, "mountains" and all, are said to describe Forest Hill, although the poem was really written at Horton, to the east of Windsor:—

> "Russet lawns and fallows gray
> Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
> Mountains on whose barren breast
> The labouring clouds do often rest.
> Meadows trim with daisies pied,
> Shallow brooks and rivers wide.
> Towers and battlements it sees,
> Bosom'd high in tufted trees."

The towers and battlements, more probably of Windsor Castle, have been claimed to be those of distant Oxford, which were visible, and perhaps are still, in gaps between the hills. We were quite

content not to look for them. The Manor home of the poet's wife was very different from the existing house. It had plain angular gables, mullioned casements, and diagonally-set Jacobean chimney clusters. It was pulled down within the last half-century. In addition to the old gateway before mentioned, the only connecting link with Milton remaining is to be found in the wall of a barn in the farmyard, where some initials are said to refer to something in *Paradise Lost*. What this may be we cannot undertake to say. Anyhow, local tradition relates that that masterpiece was written in a barn here, regardless of other traditions related at Eyford and Chalfont. Another contemporary barn at Forest Hill, demolished not long ago, perhaps contained something more lucid upon its ornamental plastering for poetic pilgrims to unravel. Had literary genius been better appreciated in this slender waist of Oxfordshire, perhaps more substantial landmarks might have been suffered to remain. But then poor Mickle has also been left in the lurch, for he was interred on the north side of this pretty churchyard *without a memorial*. His less classic style doubtless has little in common with so great a gun as Milton; nevertheless, his quaint and gloomy ballad, *Cumnor Hall*, alone is worthy of at least a tablet! The idea of the aged Cornish bard who is now engaged in erecting a

pyramidal construction of stones to his own memory is by far the safer plan to follow for such as wish to be immortal. None of this Cornish genius's inspirations are upon paper, either in the form of print or manuscript; but what does that matter, so long as the premature erection will stand the wear and tear of time!

But to return to Mrs. Milton. If the more eastward of her husband's many London abodes were distasteful to the Oxfordshire lass, when she was induced to return she had at least the satisfaction of dying amidst (if she did not live long enough to enjoy) the garden prettiness of the house by St. James's Park. In 1750 the great poet's *Comus* was played for the benefit of Elizabeth Foster, an old widow woman who kept a chandler's shop in Cock Lane, near Shoreditch Church. Her mother, Deborah Milton, had proved by no means a model daughter, and, like her sisters, had turned rebellious quite in the modern style of filial emancipation. The Royalist sympathies of the Powells had been inherited from their mother, and naturally the reaction of the Restoration had helped to set them against the old style of discipline.

Forest Hill Church contains some good Norman work in the entrance door and chancel arch, and the "king-post" roof of the nave is very

plain and very substantial. Hanging upon a wall is framed a piece of ancient needlework, gold embroidered upon a red velvet background, with the heads and wings of angels worked upon it. Presumably it is part of an ecclesiastical vestment.

We quitted Sandford and the northward Oxford road, so must return to that point to pilot the traveller to the destination determined at the outset. The Manor of the Powells included "The Mynchery," another old farmhouse, once a nunnery, which lies in a hollow a little to the east of the main road. The living house here has been less modernised than the Manor Farm, and the Tudor windows and a quaint little gazebo in the garden wall give it a picturesque appearance viewed from the orderly and prosperous-looking farm lands.

At Cowley, nearer to Oxford, where was the original Templar establishment, things have advanced with rapid strides. The old hospital of "St. Barty," as it is locally termed, at the time of the Civil War was stripped of its leaden roof to make bullets, and after that was converted into a Pest House. From the ancient chapel a subterranean passage is said to run to the site of the Templars' demolished Preceptory. The Manor House of Temple Cowley in its decaying days long enjoyed the privacy of a haunted house. It

was shunned excepting by the very venturesome at nightfall. But all its Jacobean personality long since has been swamped in the Barracks which have arisen in its proximity, the principal part of which unfortunately has no trees handy to conceal its ugliness. Hereabouts what little romance existed was speedily dispelled by the advent of lunatic asylums, sewage farms, and other delights of civilisation. At Iffley, on the western side of the main road, however, things have not progressed at so rapid a rate, but in a measure its rusticity has been impaired. The quaint old inn and the stocks close by have been ruthlessly cleared away, and the aged elm which kept them company for so many years lives on to see more sweeping changes. The most picturesque old mill, too, is said to have been burnt down. But the grand Norman church remains, so one must be grateful.

CHAPTER XI

THE WAIST OF OXFORDSHIRE

OXFORD, beautiful as it is, how different from what it must have looked in the time of Thomas Hearne, the antiquary! Two centuries ago the diligent scribe and collector was continually lamenting the loss of some grand old building, scholastic or otherwise!

As one wanders round the neighbouring villages, the county's loyalty to the Stuarts, recorded in many ways, is very noticeable. The chancel wall of a church on the north-western side, beyond the intervening corner of Berkshire, shows the courage of the convictions of the rector of 1648 —a dangerous period to speak out one's mind— for he set up the following inscription:—

"Sacred to the memory of the Most Holy King and Martyr, Charles. Stop! traveller. Lament.

—Be silent.—Be astonished.—Remember that Charles First, equally by name, and for piety, King of Great Britain, who at first deceived by the perfidy of Rebels, then stricken by their madness, still the unwavering defender of the faith and our law, yielded to the tyranny of Schismatics in the year of human salvation 1648, the first year of our slavery and of his happiness: robbed of a terrestrial Crown, presented with a Heavenly one"—and much more to the same effect. Such were the loyal sentiments of the majority in and about Oxford. The city had welcomed the Stuart King in prosperity, had supported him against his enemies, and kept staunch to him when defeated. The traditional loyalty was handed down from father to son, and Jacobitism simmered far into the eighteenth century.

Before bidding adieu to the county, let us give a passing glance at a few of the villages to the north-east and south-east of the city.

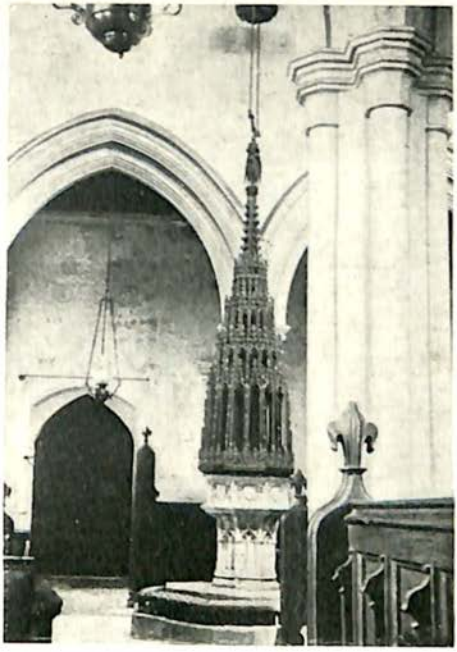
Taking Forest Hill as the centre point, Stanton St. John is close at hand, a little over a mile away to the north-west. In its picturesque churchyard situated by an abrupt downward bend of the road, lie buried Milton's grandmother and great-grandfather, which takes us back to the days when the St. Johns (mentioned in an earlier chapter), who gave name to the village in the time of Henry

III., were still possessed of the Manor. But one looks around in vain for any of their monuments, for tombs within the church are conspicuous by their absence. Some of the bench-ends are very odd: double demoniacal heads hideous enough to frighten the smaller children attendants at service into fits—crowned heads and ladies with mediæval head-dress, as well as the heads of horses. The restorations and alterations by a former rector may have been praiseworthy, but the effect of the re-arranged oak carving in the vicinity of the pulpit is not altogether convincing. The carvings also in the organ-chamber seem to have lost their way, nor do the carved oak figures on the floor look any happier. Maybe they are dreading the approach of some enthusiastic collector who might take a fancy to them. In any case, it would be as well for them to be on the safe side of a lock. The screen now dividing off the organ looks as little at home as the rest of the fittings. The east window is remarkable for its lozenge-shaped tracery, and here and in the south-west window there is some interesting thirteenth-century glass. Two figures represented on the latter presumably are prostrating themselves before a shrine supported by two larger figures. The subject has a curious background of yellow castles and white fleurs-de-lis. On the north side

of the chancel is an Easter sepulchre ogee arch minus its terminal.

The old gabled Rectory House, that used to stand on the south side of the churchyard, and which looks very fascinating in old engravings, alas! has vanished, but another old Tudor building opposite the church and a sturdy barn with big projecting buttresses adds to the picturesqueness of this corner.

At Beckley, a mile and a half further to the north-west (where the Roman road which ran to Dorchester may still be traced), we are still among the hills, and the church, as at Stanton, is found on the downward incline to the village. A wide and delightful landscape of the more level country is obtained from the churchyard. A grand carriage had just pulled up on the summit of the hill, and some aged lady of the manor, followed by her footman carrying a capacious parcel, was on her way to perform some kindly act; this was evident from the expectant expressions at the cottage doors. These few residences could be almost counted on the fingers, and yet the abnormal width of the church porch looks as if the entrance to the Holy edifice had been constructed for a crowd. Its bleached and crumbling double-doors, as well as the fine old inner door, with enormous iron hinges and scroll-work, are undoubtedly the same that



Font Cover, Ewelme

Old House, Steventon

were set on their hinges in the reign of Henry VIII., to which period much of the church belongs. But the chancel, as at Stanton, is much earlier, and also has some ancient painted glass. But nothing dates back to the Royal Plantagenet King of the Romans, who had a palace at Beckley which gradually dwindled down to a pigeon-cote, and now is entirely extinct. The Crokes of Studley Priory, a good Elizabethan house a few miles to the east on the Buckinghamshire border, were granted certain privileges at the Dissolution, and one or two of their monuments remain, including a brass of the time of James I., the father perhaps of Sir George, who built the quaint old row of almshouses at Studley hamlet. The interior of Beckley Church altogether is very old-fashioned. The benches are the original ones, and the carved oak pulpit retains its elaborate canopy with, attached to the wall, the ancient hour-glass and stand. Faded frescoes adorn some of the walls. Perhaps it is as well they are sufficiently indistinct so as not to harrow sensitive nerves with the unpleasant burnings and boilings of the infernal regions. The lid of the Gothic chest is so warped and contorted that it might have undergone some of the torturings depicted. Other curiosities are a stone desk over the font for baptism services and the Holy-water stoup by the

porch entrance. The circular staircase turret, with conical roof attached to the tower, is also of uncommon construction.

Towards Wood Eaton, which is on the western side of the main road to Chipping Norton, we dip down again. Of village there is scarcely anything beyond the church, Rectory, and Manor House. These are assembled together amidst a setting of pine-trees. In the centre of a very miry village green is the stump of a cross enclosed within railings, and a well for universal use, whose overflow for cattle is accountable for the swampy condition of the sward. The Manor House is late Georgian, and the Rectory not very picturesque, and yet the village has been styled "an extremely interesting example of the traditional English village." It may have been so years ago, when the stocks stood on the green and before the "Italian style" of mansion was erected, but as it is now we must confess to inability to "enthuse" in any way, for hundreds of villages are far more picturesque and typical of rustic, old-world England. The situation of the church, however, is decidedly pretty. The top of the low stone ivy-decked boundary walls are flush with the level of the graveyard, and this shows off the graceful embattled tower and oddly stunted nave to the best advantage. The great old trees with

enormous stretching limbs, which stand sentinel around, also help to make the picture. Inside, the antiquated Georgian style is undisturbed. There are the usual tall, square pews (with formal rows of clothes-pegs), a gallery, and a "three-decker" pulpit with a canopy. A primitive-looking stone seat with an arm to it in the chancel, however, speaks of mediæval times. In the floor and over the Manor pew are tombs to the Nourses. Richard and Martha of that ilk must have had some mystic sympathy with the number seventy-three, for both of them died in 1673, aged seventy-three. The family of Taverner preceded the Nourses in possession of the Manor. Richard Taverner, who lived in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., was imprisoned for slandering Anne of Cleeves, but, being an enthusiastic reformer, was soon reinstated into favour.

Noke, another tiny retired village about a mile away on the other side of the main road, among its reminiscences can boast association with two influential people—William the Conqueror and Sarah Duchess of Marlborough. The former gave the Manor to his son-in-law as an inexpensive marriage gift; the latter made herself remembered by pulling down the Manor House, as she and her noble husband did in so many other Oxfordshire villages. Nobody can contradict that

what these historic celebrities undertook was very thorough, and therefore an epitaph in the little double-belfried church might well apply to either of them :—

"We know thou art not lost, but sent before
Thy friendes, all left thy absence to deploare.
Nor can thy vertues ever be forgotten,
Tho' in thy grave thy corpes be dead and rotten.
For ill-tongued envie to the world must tell,
That as thou livdst, thou didst, and that was well."

Thus runs a brass tablet in the chancel to Johan Bradshawe, daughter and co-heir of John Hurste, and wife of Henry Bradshawe, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer in 1553, who died in 1598, and who (with her two husbands and eight children) is engraved upon the metal. The friends of poor Benedict Winchcombe (who died towards the close of the succeeding reign) were not so loyal, although he left a legacy for church repair. Of his chantry-chapel and the stately altar-tomb which supported his effigy, nothing remains, and his shapeless form is poked away in the organ chamber. He might come in handy by-and-bye for a clock-weight, or a cheese-press like the ancient font that was discovered the other day put to this use in a farm in Wales.

The villages of Noke, Oddington, and Charlton are all equi-distant, about a mile. Between

the first two the river Ray intervenes, so it is necessary to make a westerly detour through Islip, a market town in the olden days, but now a very sleepy village, which has its share of historical associations from the Civil War disturbances back to the last saintly king of the old English stock, for Edward the Confessor was born at Islip, or Githslepe, as the place was then named. The ancient font that tradition says was used at the baptism of this Monarch of the House of Cedric, like many other baptismal fonts, has suffered several vicissitudes. The arcading upon it proves it to be of a later date by two and a half centuries—a detail which need not necessarily discommode a local tradition! This font was not used as a cheese-press, but for something equally mundane and servile, for it was utilised as a receptacle for turkey "cramming"; nor can it be wondered that it turned the food bad and killed all the turkeys who had partaken of it. After this behaviour, of course, the font was evicted, and spent some years of exile at another farm near Bicester, where some benefactor saw it, and, taking pity on its fallen state, had it put up in Middleton Stoney Church, near that town, where it may be seen to this day.

Like most "lions" within their own home circles, the memory of the Confessor was little

venerated at Islip; the remains of his Palace and chapel degenerated into the outbuildings of the "Red Lion Hotel," where some of the old stonework is still visible in the walls. The moat of the old Palace also remains.

The entrance to Islip over the balustraded bridge (not far from which the Ray and the Cherwell rivers join hands) is picturesque, and the pinnacled Perpendicular tower of the old grey church stands out well amidst an assembly of gabled roofs of farm outbuildings. The chancel and the old Manor House were burnt down at the time of the skirmishes here between the Royalists and Republicans. In the moat of the Manor, some eighty years afterwards, many cart-loads of lead were extracted which would have come in handy for bullets had the Cavaliers been able to make use of it. But here their side lost heavily. On April 24th, 1645, Fairfax won a victory near the bridge, capturing two hundred prisoners and the Queen's standard. In the previous May, too, Charles was defeated in the engagement of Arslow Bridge close by.

The church at Oddington has been rather painfully restored. Its ancient circular font is of the plainest Early English form, like a cut-off portion of a circular pillar. The Jacobean pulpit, supported on a stem, remains, but there is very

little else of note saving a large repulsive brass in the chancel floor to a rector when Henry VIII. was King, one Ralph Hamsterley. As this worthy was not buried here, but at his former college chapel at Merton, there was no necessity for "rubbing in" the unpleasant part of his own dissolution as drastically as was the wholesale destruction a few years after his decease. But the brass is worthy of further rubbings as a curiosity that a Churchman should in his lifetime find pleasure in morbidly contemplating the future state of decomposition, the spaces left for the omitted date[1] showing that the brass was put down in his lifetime. From the mouth issues in Latin rhyme:—"Thus am I given to the worms, thus am I to show that as I am here laid out, so all honour is laid aside." The cere-cloth of the skeleton figure is ripped open, revealing horrors such as are poetically described in the ancient romance: *Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene:*—

"The worms they crept in, and the worms they crept out,
And sported his eyes and his temples about."

Who can tell but that "Monk" Lewis got the inspiration of his gruesome ballad from this very effigy, for when he left Westminster School he studied for a time at Christ Church, Oxford.

[1] He died August 4th, 1518.

Be this as it may, it is certain no better or more graphic representation of the bridal spectre could be found. The lady who brought the church key (at the requested intimation of one of the young people who flit about with jugs at the afternoon milking hour) had nothing to say for or against the brass. Her interest was evidently centred upon the smaller and more serviceable form of metal.

This church, requiring the accompaniment of a custodian, by the way, is an exception, for this part of Oxfordshire is very kind regarding unlocked doors. But as we write comes the news of another scandalous and spiteful outrage by the "wild women" upon the harmless little church of Penn, in Bucks; so for the future one would willingly hunt for keys and caretakers rather than risk the possibilities of such nameless and meaningless attacks. The shaft of a "preaching" cross standing upon steps is in the churchyard of Oddington, but there is nothing else to see, so we will hurry on to Charlton, trying to forget the creepiness of that strange brass.

At Charlton-on-Otmoor lingers one of those pretty old customs which annually is demonstrated on May Day. We do not refer to the ordinary modern decking-up and maypole winding, but to a ceremony peculiar to this village.

The church of Charlton possesses one of those rare constructions—a Rood loft, and upon the summit of this may be seen a large wooden cross enveloped in box and laurel greenery. Upon it hangs a garland, also made of leaves. And so the cross is re-decorated every May Day with befitting ceremony. The village maidens, robed in white, form a procession and bear the new "May Cross" to the church, chanting hymns. We remember seeing such a leafy garland hung upon a pinnacle of the church tower of a village in northern Derbyshire. This in like form is replaced by a new one on May Day each year, but there on Restoration Day instead of the first of the merry month.

The grand old Rood-screen at Charlton is well worthy of such distinction; its beautiful Gothic carvings are floriated in free flamboyant style. The loft above is several feet in width, and the interlaced groining of the abutting cornice is elaborately wrought, added to which the original colouring and gilding distinguishes this example of Henry VII. woodwork as one of the finest specimens in the country. Unfortunately, the stairway has been done away with, though the arch of it remains in the wall dividing off the nave. The extinguisher-cover to the tub-shaped font also has quite a personality of its own. The

summit slants outward at an obtuse angle, and is delicately carved on the topmost part in the form of a crown. It may be coeval, or perhaps a little later than the screen. Here, too, in the north and south aisles are some of the original benches. Outside the brave old oaken door of the entrance porch is the lofty shaft of a cross, but, as usual, denuded of its head.

There are other old customs at Charlton besides the garland-hanging, for the curfew still rings there, and the lord of the manor has the privilege enjoyed of old by gentlemen of the road, for at certain periods he can demand the male parishioners, between the ages of eighteen and sixty, to hand over "head silver," otherwise twopence, for no services rendered. In centuries past the villagers paid without a murmur, but at the dawn of the last century came the glimmering of that independence which of late years has developed into such vast proportions. At last somebody ventured to suggest that Charltonites ought to have something to show for their money, and a yokel genius more brilliant than the rest proposing that beer by its speedy consumption would not appear too grasping, the difficulty was amicably settled and the measure decided at a quart, and so the score was decidedly against the landed lord!

Charlton being at the northern extremity of the

narrow waist of Oxon, let us return to Forest Hill and see what lies more to the south. The villages of Horsepath and Wheatley, in the hilly country south of the Thame and Oxford highway, are both picturesquely situated, but the proximity of a railway station to the latter has brought with it the usual evidences of ugliness. The church is modern, but Wheatley possesses a few old houses with Gothic chimneys and doorways more or less dilapidated, and on high ground the tall extinguisher-roofed lock-up was a conspicuous warning in old days. The stocks are said to be still inside this odd-looking structure, but a rusty padlock on the door keeps up the reputation of the building, and now it is as difficult to get in as formerly it was to get out. Ancient beams and oak-panelled rooms are to be found by those who hunt for them. One room, Holton-way, a little to the north, came from the old Manor House of that village, which was pulled down in the year of Waterloo. The moat, however, remains, and near it some very aged elms and an oak of enormous girth, that must have witnessed some formidable sieges in feudal days. To such hoary sentinels the marriage here of Ireton to Bridget Cromwell on June 15th, 1646, was comparatively a recent event. The Lord Protector's bigoted daughter has been described as a "personage of sublime growth," and thus she resembles the old trees as well as

an ancient cherry planted by her august parent upon this auspicious occasion. The church register relates that the happy couple were married at the Manor, then in the possession of Mrs. Jane Whorwood, *née* Rithon, the widow of a Mr. Brome Whorwood, descended from the Bromes who previously held the lands. This Mrs. Whorwood, though helpful on this occasion to one of the most active regicides, nevertheless was one of the most active secret agents of Charles the Martyr during his imprisonment at Carisbrooke. It was through her efforts the file was obtained which cut the bar in the castle window when the King nearly effected his escape. Lilly, the astrologer, relates how Lady Whorwood came to him with particulars of the plot of how, once released, a vessel anchored near the castle was to carry the Royal fugitive to the Sussex coast, where horses were in readiness to take him to supporters assembled in Kent ready to march and join the loyal citizens of London. Lilly got a locksmith of Bow Lane to make a miniature saw capable of cutting iron, and this with some *aqua fortis* was smuggled into Carisbrooke. But the width of the window had been miscalculated, and the result was utter failure.[1]

From these associations of the demolished

[1] *Vide, Memoirs of the Martyr King.*

mansion of Holton, we turn more westward, and by several ups and downs and twisting lanes reach Horsepath, whose pretty creeper-clad church under the brow of Shotover Hill has some peculiarities quite of its own. Just within the south entrance stands, by all appearances, a stone font raised upon a pillar, and having a peculiarly small receptacle for water. The top is octangular, and has a moulded rim. It is really a Holy-water stoup, for the ordinary font, hexagonal in shape, stands at the western end of the nave. A window of the chantrey chapel has also quite a distinctive character, as have also two large figures forming the corbels of the tower arch. From these latter we may learn that the discordant notes of the bagpipes were in the dim and distant ages as little appreciated in southern Britain as they are to-day. But rather it is the lady victim unprovided with an instrument of torture who is suffering, for her companion is too busy with his pipes to pay attention to his own martyrdom. The poor woman wards off the attack to the best of her ability by stretching out her hands. In the windows are some bits of old glass, among them the representation of a man holding a spear upon which is a boar's head, doubtless having reference to the ancient tenure of Boarstall Tower, just across the border in Bucks.

Cuddesdon and Garsington villages, to the south of Wheatley, both stand high, commanding extensive views. The former church is cruciform, and its symmetrical lines and imposing approach have the ecclesiastical air of distinction proper to the residential living of the Prelates of Oxford. Their Palace, re-erected in the latter half of the seventeenth century, is more remarkable for size than beauty; house and church alike have been considerably modernised, and a training college near by recalls a modern part of Oxford. The west door of the church is Norman and a fine specimen, and the old cross, mounted on steps, by the porch looks well enough, but probably looked much better in its original position on the village green. Garsington is far more interesting and old-fashioned. It climbs up a steep winding road, on the summit of which is the church surrounded by trees overlooking the country for miles around. On the slope of the hill, the further side, stands the curious old Manor House, silent and sombre, its queer and domed central tower having as much as it can do to stretch its stunted neck to see over the prodigiously tall yew hedges that flank it on either side. This sombre wall of black-green and the formal knobbed entrance-gate in front are more than ordinarily awe-inspiring. It looks a house with a history, and a history of a

ghostly character. It was occupied, but was said to have been recently untenanted, and then the enclosing walls of yew must have enshrouded it in even a denser atmosphere of gloom. A well-groomed chauffeur in the road awaiting somebody's pleasure spoke glowingly of the view of the house from the other side, where, he said, there was a stretch of water and colour plentiful in the shape of flower-beds, and it was relieving to hear that the mansion had a duplex disposition, for, judging from the front, one would have scarcely credited it. Probably it was in this Manor that Fairfax took up his quarters when he stopped at Garsington in May, 1646, while planting his troops around Oxford prior to the King's flight.

A peculiarity of the church are the "low-side" or leper windows, for on either side of the chancel the ordinary windows have been lowered, so that the bottom part now forms a transom. The clerestory nave has a good Perpendicular roof supported by angel brackets, and the entrance porch has also carving of this period. Beyond small brasses of Thomas Radley and his wife and children (of Elizabethan date), there are but few monumental remains. An ancient lich-gate of very simple outline leads into the churchyard, and in the village is one of the tall crosses mounted on steps so often encountered in this part of the

country. Of the meaning of an ancient elm known as "penny-farthing tree" we will make no attempt at a guess. If that amount was annually due to the lord of the manor from the male inhabitants like the twopence at Charlton, it would be more than unreasonable to claim a quart of beer in return.

Eastward of these villages, in the verdant valley runs the river Thame, and if we follow its southward course towards Dorchester, the next village reached is Chislehampton, which in these days of hurry is called "Chistleton," whereas in the leisurely Middle Ages it was Chevacheeshullhampton. The ancient buttressed bridge spanning the river was sturdy enough to survive the Civil war, and it is further interesting for its association with the patriot Hampden's vain attempt to block the narrow passage against the impetuous Rupert. The Prince and his dashing cavalry, on June 17th, 1643, made a night attack upon Chinnor, the picturesque little village situated at the base of the Chilterns on the Buckinghamshire border of Oxfordshire. Chislehampton's bridge was the only free passage by which the Cavaliers could get back to Oxford, whence they had set out. Dispatching a hasty message to Essex, Hampton hurried from Watlington with the Bucks Militia in the direction of this crossing to

Porch, Ewelme

Somerford Keynes

the river Thame, and at Chalgrove, some three miles to the south-east, came up with Rupert's force, and in the well-known skirmish there received his death-wound. But more of this anon.

The church and Manor House associated with the ancient family of D'Oyley, both were pulled down and re-erected in the middle of the eighteenth century. The latter is a large building of red brick; the former an odd-looking structure, more like the clock-tower stabling of a Georgian mansion. The inside is a typical church interior of a century and a half ago—"two-decker" pulpit, square high-walled pews, old gallery, and clear square-paned windows looking out upon the greenery without. A plentiful supply of candles in their highly-burnished brass supports keeps up the Georgian character, and a high-backed Queen Anne armchair in the tiny vestry is a connecting link with the fag-end of the Stuart period, when the old Manor House was still alive, and the aged villagers had distant memories of Cavalier and Puritan. The scene is very charming by the old bridge, where various streams intersect the willow-lined meadows, and where tall poplars and elms look down upon old thatched cottages. Stadhampton, a near neighbour to Chislehampton, on the Thame and Wallingford road, has in its very much restored church a brass tablet of a

youthful D'Oyle descendant (viz., Dorothy Clarke, daughter of John and Dorothy "of the ancient family of Doylyes"), who died in 1654. Another brass records the interment of "John Wylmot and Alys, his wife," in 1508.

Drayton St. Leonard, further south, has a homely-looking little church, with slated hip-roof tower-belfry supported by enormous Gothic beams, such as those we have inspected at Lyford. The entrance porch is also Gothic, and in the chancel we make acquaintance with the saintly Bishop who distinguishes this village from its Berkshire neighbour to the west. St. Leonard, represented in fifteenth-century glass, is in the north window. We encountered the good rector carrying a hot dinner to one of his invalided parishioners, and he courteously showed us round the beauties of his extensive garden, which was gay with flowers.

Chalgrove, of Hampden association (due east of Drayton, about two and a half miles), has the most annoying of churches, for the road wanders around it, just keeping it in sight, and never brings you nearer; and having completed this extensive square boundary, you are as far away as ever, and have to strike a bee-line across the fields, keeping it in sight unless it may still escape. The old church looks pretty and peaceful in its seclusion

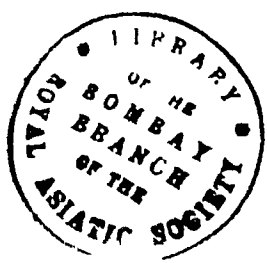
surrounded by meadows, with a couple of ancient yew-trees to bear it company. Happily the door was unlocked, and thus saved many weary wanderings. The staring new yellow benches here look decidedly aggressive upon entering. You are knocked backwards at first, but getting accustomed to the colour and the varnish, the iris of the eye adapts itself to the modified faded tones that decorate the walls. A framed representation of these frescoes in miniature brings their wandering extremities into focus, so that by careful comparison you can make head or tail of them. In Hampden's time, of course, the whole of them were obliterated with a lavish coating of whitewash, but this was cleared away so far as possible a little over half a century ago. Some interesting large brasses of the Barenynes, fifteenth-century knights in armour and their dames adorned with the horned and winged head-dress, have been extracted from their monumental sockets in the floor and hang upon the wall as if in penance. The capitals of the columns supporting the nave show independence of design, and the stone Jacobean font with twisted pedestal also has distinctive character peculiar to itself.

Travellers bound for Watlington and London will pass an obelisk standing above the highway in the corner of a field. It commemorates the

patriot's death, and was erected on the bi-centenary. Great Hampden, in Bucks, where he was interred with his ancestors, only went better than this by a century, for not until that time had elapsed was a monument put up in the church there. The medallion upon Chalgrove obelisk shows the profile of a young man with flowing locks and a remarkably firm mouth and chin, which well bears out his character. Whether or not it is supposed to be an authentic portrait it would be interesting to know, for excepting a miniature at Windsor, the only known contemporary portrait is that by Robert Walker at Port Eliot in Cornwall. Historians some eighty years ago must have been influential people to be allowed to maul a grave about to satisfy the curious as to whether Hampden's death was really caused by the two bullets he received in the shoulder as related by Clarendon. To settle this controversial point raised by the patriot's son-in-law, Sir Robert Pye, of Faringdon, who declared his death was caused by the bursting of his pistol, Lord Nugent went to the pains of dismembering the mummy of its arms. But the re-interred body proved as elusive as his "authentic" portraits, for strong evidence subsequently came forward to prove that the exhumed person was *a female*, and that the supposed shattered hand interred in a separate

wrapper were the remains of *an infant!* Be this as it may, his lordship's knowledge of anatomy cannot have been very profound, for he admitted that he had "many reasons for believing the body to be not John Hampden's, but that of some gentleman or lady who probably died a quiet death in bed, certainly with no wound in the wrist."

Even the Hampden cornelian in the Bodleian Library is evasive, for the "posy" it contains may be taken in a double sense, both loyal and otherwise, according to the punctuation.



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